

大いなる力に助けられ、 世界が変えられる

黙下録

アホ
カリマス


なめこ印
イラスト／和羅ナオ



「波乱烈火様で
なみだれうか
ございますか？」

その少女は突然
俺の前に現れた
——
宙に逆さまに浮きながら。





こんなことなら、中学の時に
さっさと告白すればよかった……

烈火の幼馴染
おおとも さつき
大友皐月

宇宙人のお嬢様

イリス・フイネリタス・
サイファーコール

な、何なの……..
ていうかつ、手……

異世界の魔導士

ハリツサ・ホウプ

「勇者様！」

「いざで、終わりだあー!」

俺は返した手首で、メサイアに『勇者の剣』を再度振るう。

Ore ga Heroine Volume 01

Prologue 0-1: Ootomo Satsuki

— —

The Great Magic of Creation.

Since ancient times, rumors of this secret ritual had been rife amongst wizards.

This Great Magic allowed the wielder to access the Akashic Records, a tome detailing all creations of Nature, and gain knowledge of everything in the world.

If this Magic really existed, it could grant the power to save, destroy or control the world.

Its keepers were a clan of wizards, passing knowledge of the Magic secretly from generation to generation, right up to the present day...

And right now, the young girl of the clan tasked to protect the Great Magic was worried.

Her name was Ootomo Satsuki, and she would turn sixteen tomorrow.

In her clan, turning sixteen held a very important meaning indeed.

Apart from being the ones chosen to guard the Great Magic of Creation generation through generation, there was also a clause that protected the clan from dying out.

This clause was termed the Contract of Creation.

It stated that whoever shared a kiss with an Ootomo under the Contract would be bound to her for life as her partner.

In short, it was a contract of magic to ensure that the clan would always have descendants.

That's not too complicated, you say... But there was one big problem.

The one who seals the Contract of Creation with Satsuki must, like her, be able to wield the Great Magic of Creation.

And this important Contract must be sealed when she turns sixteen.

Thus, the Great Magic of Creation is truly a double-edge sword.

If Satsuki chooses the wrong partner, the world could be destroyed, in the worst case scenario.

To make things even more complicated, the tide of evil clans wanting to harness the Great Magic of Creation for their own purposes had never ceased through the eras...

From the time it all began, Satsuki's clan had employed thousands of different disguises and gone through just as many hiding places in order to shield their true identities from these villains.

However, a man had appeared recently, who managed to break through the clan's disguise and pinpoint the exact location of the Great Magic of Creation.

His name was Messiah Candystaps, the most powerful wizard of this era.

Great magical prowess aside, he was also rumored to be a man greedy for power and knowledge, with an exceedingly strong desire to fulfill his own cause. It could spell disaster if the Great Magic of Creation fell into his hands.

In order to protect both their daughter and the Great Magic of Creation, Satsuki's parents had gone to confront Messiah.

However, all they managed to do was buy her some time.

Meanwhile, Satsuki worked on memorizing escape spells, such as "Transference" and "Float". However, given the vast difference between the magical powers of Satsuki and Messiah, even if she managed to

escape from him, her abilities would not be enough to keep her going. He would no doubt catch up with her in 1-2 day's time.

Since the time of Satsuki's birth, her parents had taught her everything about the Great Magic of Creation so that she would inherit the clan's destiny. Therefore, she was currently the only person in the world with the power to access the Akashic Records, and the only individual whom anyone who wished to possess the Great Magic has to seal the Contract of Creation with. There was no doubt that Messiah would do anything to be the one, and with his level of magic, it would be child's play to seal the Contract.

Thus, the only solution right now was for Satsuki to seal the Contract with someone else before Messiah could get to her.

".....!"

Satsuki wiped away the tears that had quietly gathered at the corners of her eyes.

She had wanted to experience a true romance. To go slowly, step by step, nurture their love, before confessing her secret and helping "him" to fulfill his role.

However, time was not going to wait for her. Messiah was not going to wait for her.

Satsuki started penning her letter again... if only to prevent her tears from falling onto the paper.

'If I knew this was going to happen, I would have confessed my feelings for you back when we were still in middle school.'

Her mind full of could-haves, Satsuki's pen flew across the page. Again and again, the words blurred and blotted with her tears, and she started out with a fresh piece of paper...

Dawn broke, and the letter was finally done. Satsuki finished off by writing "his" name on the envelope.

“For Namidare Rekka-sama”...

— —

Notes:

The Akashic Records is a term used in theosophy to describe a compendium of mystical knowledge encoded in a non-physical plane of existence. Read more on [wiki](#).

Prologue 0-2: Iris Pheneritas Psyfacor

— —

“Damn it! And to think I escaped all the way to this godforsaken planet!”

Iris swore as she glanced over her shoulder.

Leaping from rooftop to rooftop like Superman was Iris and the two entities chasing her.

The couple of beings behind Iris were sent from her home planet, Phenerita.

Dressed in sunglasses and black tuxedos, they looked at home on this current planet, just like normal Earthlings at first glance. However, both sported horse-like tails behind them which bespoke of their alien origins.

Of course, Iris, with a silver tail sprouting from her bottom, was an alien too.

And though Iris was the daughter of the most powerful man on Phenerita, she was now a mere runaway.

The reason for her escape was simple; she could not agree with her father’s marriage proposition for her. Most frankly, it was more like a

strategic political marriage, and she was a tribute to be paid to some kingdom. In short, it was a marriage in which she had no say.

But Iris would never accept that.

So that was why she had set her personal spaceship to random warp mode, and escaped to this faraway planet. But the pursuers soon found her, meaning her father had already predicted her ill thought-out plan.

But Iris was not going to let them take her back without a fight.

So she ran.

Ran with all her might.

In her panic, she jumped onto the roof of a dilapidated building.

“Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

A tremendous amount of dirt and dust billowed up upon her thunderous fall, shielding Iris and her pursuers from each other.

‘This is the worst,’ Iris thought to herself where she sat, covered in dust.

That was the moment she first met the youth.

“Over here! Let’s go!”

“Huh?”

Gripping Iris’ hand tight in his, they ran through the dust, so thick she couldn’t see more than ten centimeters ahead of her.

With her mind still in a whirl, Iris was soon dragged out of the building by the hand.

In the light, the youth appeared to be an Earthling.

And he seemed to have just saved Iris’ life.

‘W-what was that...? And, our hands...’

It was her first time touching a boy, much less one from a different planet, but his grip was stronger than she'd ever imagined. She felt her face grow hot.

She knew she should thank him for saving her, but the embarrassment from their still-joined hands caused her to blurt out a rude request instead.

"H-hey, what is your name?"

Namidare Rekka, was what the youth replied.

Prologue 0-3: Harissa Hope

— —

The 7th Demon King Suppression Contingent, formed to defeat the Demon King who had awakened after hundreds of years of dormancy, had failed in their mission, just as the contingents before them had.

Men, weapons, magic; nothing had managed to break the shield which surrounded the solitary island where the Demon King lurked, and the demons he summoned from Hell effectively scattered the troops who even dared to try.

The Demon King's army's frequent attacks all over the kingdom slowly sapped the power of the country's troops, and the place seemed doomed to fall to the evil lord.

That was why the people waited and prayed.

For the second coming of the hero, foretold in their legends.

~

"...A-a-a-alright, let the interworld summoning b-b-b-begin!"

Harissa, dressed in the robe made specially for female mages, announced in a trembly, shrill voice.

Before her stood the king and his chief advisor, surrounded by other advisors of the court, as well as army dignitaries.

Harissa knew that this great spell of the era she was casting could not fail in front of these men.

The great spell to summon a hero from another world...a legendary spell only known to royalty.

‘I-I-I better make this work...!’

Green magic flowed into the magic square from the end of Harissa’s staff, gripped tightly in her hands. If her powers could reach out to the neighboring world, a hero who could defeat the Demon King would appear... If this worked.

If the royal legend was accurate. If Harissa’s skill was enough.

But this could not fail. There was a reason Harissa could not let this fail.

However, if the legend was just nonsense, then there was nothing Harissa could do.

‘Argh~ This is starting to feel like it won’t work~’

Harissa thought as her strength slowly ebbed, but she didn’t stop pouring the magic from her staff.

Finally, the magic square was filled with her power, and its glow changed.

The wavering green flame turned white-hot, then converged on the king’s throne.

“W-what is happening!?”

“Harissa Hope, what have you done?!”

"I-I just did what you told me to~"

For a few moments, everyone present exchanged angry bellows and tearful shouts.

Then, the magic square stopped glowing.

Aside from a group of dazed men still partially blinded by the bright light, the room seemed exactly as it had been before the magic square started glowing.

The only difference...was that there was now a youth standing in the middle of the magic square.

"Huh? What? What is this? Where is this place?"

With a baffled expression, the youth looked around him.

He seemed to be clothed in a mysterious material that no one in the kingdom had ever seen before.

The room was soon filled with questions as the dignitaries fired queries at each other.

"An alien?" "A youth?" "I've never seen someone like him before."
"From another world?" "Summoning?" "Did it work?"

Then, as if everyone's thoughts arrived at the same conclusion in the same moment, a single question popped out.

....."Our hero?"

"Hero-sama!"

It was Harissa, the summoner, who leaped out from the crowd to welcome the youth.

Rushing up to the still-baffled man, she caught him in a strong embrace.

With tears of happiness spilling from the corners of her eyes, she glanced lovingly at him with a look of pure bliss. He did seem rather ordinary in appearance, but the look Harissa gave him would have made anyone think that she thought him the most handsome man in the world.

“Huh? W-why are you crying?”

“Hero-sama! Please tell us your name?”

Ignoring the youth’s question, Harissa fired back one of her own in an adoring voice, as if speaking to her Prince Charming.

Overwhelmed by her behavior, the youth replied hesitantly.

“I’m Namidare Rekka... So, where is this place?”

Prologue 1: From now on, I am

Part 01

— —

Today is my sixteenth birthday.

It is also the day of the opening ceremony for my high school.

I am currently attending the event, which started about 30 minutes ago. While this is just as boring as the opening ceremony for my middle school, I did my best to keep up appearances, pretending to look like an enthusiastic and eager student.

It was at that moment when a girl with shoulder-length blue hair appeared before me.

She was small, with child-like features, and seemed like to be of middle school freshman age, maybe even younger. Dressed in a uniform

resembling that from the Japanese Army, which I've seen in my textbooks, she gazed at me, unsmiling...while floating upside down before my eyes.

"Are you Namidare Rekka-sama?"

How did she know my name?

"???"

Who is this girl? And why was she floating in midair?

Flustered, I flapped my hands futilely in the air between us, causing the bespectacled guy next to me to throw a suspicious glance my way. It seems like I was the only person who could see and hear the girl.

"My name is R. You can call me R-chan if you like."

The girl started to introduce herself in an over-friendly manner, as if it was the most natural thing in the world.

Hey, wait. Slow down. Let's start over, you and I and common sense together.

But one problem. Who is this girl, R?

A hallucination? Delusion? Or is she...a ghost?

I have no wish to encounter any of those, and if I am, what shall I do?!

The situation made me want to grab my head and steady myself, but I was stuck in this opening ceremony. I need to man up and appear like a serious student, and not attract attention to myself.

I hate being the center of attention. "Ordinary is the best" is my life motto.

Being ordinary is really the best. No exceptions.

Though most people would call such a life boring, I'd say that they have no idea what it means to really be ordinary. A ordinary dude gets to pursue his interests, have fun with his friends, and generally enjoy doing normal, fun things. Is there anyone who doesn't like hanging out with friends? In truth, striving to want to become different from other people just naturally makes one lose sight of the really important things.

So, being ordinary is definitely the best way to go.

"Hello~, can you hear me?"

And now, this entity, here to thoroughly destroy my precious ordinary life, was waving her hands in front of my face...

"He~y, Namidare-sama? Hmm, that's a mouthful, isn't it? Rekka? Can I call you that instead?"

Hey hey, don't act so familiar with me yet. I can't stand it. I am listening, but just ignoring you. Anyway, why are you acting so friendly with me?

"Hey, shitty weakling, can you hear me? Answer me right now."

Who are you calling a shitty weakling? And what's with the sudden loss of courtesy? Did I do something wrong? Did I do anything to warrant you calling me a shitty weakling? No!

Wait. I need to calm down...! She just wants me to acknowledge her.

"Oh, your nose hair is sticking out."

R taunted as she pointed at my nose.

Huh? Really?

Before I knew it, I'd reached for my nose.

"Not the right side. Left, left."

Alright, the left side. Now I just need to pluck it out before anyone notices... Huh?

"I lied. Gotcha."

"Now you're asking for it!!"

"So, you could hear me all along."

"...Oh."

She got me, alright.

"That new student over there. Who's asking for it?"

That was the final blow. The principal, all the other students, even the parents were staring at me. Shit!

"N-no, it's nothing."

"Then please take a seat."

"Yes sir..."

How those stares burn. I think the embarrassment will kill me soon, and I would be glad to die. My head feels like exploding.

"Well, I already knew you could hear me the moment you reached for your nose."

And this brat still manages to sound so nonchalant...!

I stopped myself before I shouted at her again.

"Now that we've made contact, I'd love to get down to business. May I?"

Not at all. But if I ignore her now, who knows what she will do to me next?

I needed to find a way to speak to her without anyone noticing... Hmm? That's right.

I pulled my phone out of my pocket and opened up a new message.

type type

[Who are you?]

Having typed out my message, I signalled subtly for R to take a look.

Doing a turn in midair, R righted herself and gazed at my phone.

“That appears to be a really old communication device.”

Old? I’d just bought the newest model available on the market.

“But I guess that’s expected. I come from the future.”

The future?

[Did you just say future?]

“That’s right. I’m from the future.”

From the future... Seriously?

For the moment, my annoyance was replaced by countless questions.

[Am I the only one who can see you?]

“Yes. Rekka-san is the only one who can see or touch me.”

[Can I touch you?]

“Yes. Similarly, I can’t touch or speak to anyone else except Rekka-san. I’m in a state of half-materialized existence right now. Would you like a detailed explanation?”

[.....]

“There’s no need to type that. I can tell from your expression.”

Ignoring her quip, I typed out the most pressing question.

[Why is someone from the future looking for me?]

“I’ve come to save the future from doom; to alter it because you of the ‘Namidare Lineage’ have messed things up,” R replied smoothly.

The future in a mess, because of me?

My life motto is to lead an ordinary life. It’s almost impossible to imagine me having any impact on the future world.

But I do have a slight clue as to what R was talking about.

The “Namidare Lineage”... My old man had told me about the significance of the “blood” that flows within me.

And it just happened yesterday.

PART 02

— —

The Namidare home echoed with the sound of party crackers that night.

“Happy birthday, Rekka. Yahoo!!”

“Don’t point the crackers at me, old man. And don’t say things like ‘yahoo’.”

“Boo. You’re so boring, Rekka-chan.”

This old man sulking like an aged child is my father, Namidare Jigen, a strange stay-at-home dad who looks best with his apron and unshaven face. And the delicious-looking fragrant dishes spread on our dining table were all thanks to him. He even baked the birthday cake himself, no mean feat if you ask me, but I could have done without the “Rekka-chan I love you” written on the cake with chocolate.

“So, shall we dig in?”

“But mum isn’t here yet.”

“Your Mama is busy preparing for tomorrow, so she told us to start first.”

“Oh, I see.”

Mum’s preparation for tomorrow was probably related to her business trip.

My mum is the typical career woman, and had been fortunate enough to be selected to work at the company’s overseas headquarters. Worried since she had no idea how to go about household chores, my old man would be going overseas together with her. But since I would miss Japan too much, I’d decided to stay behind. Truth be told, I’d always wanted to try living on my own, and thankfully, both my parents agreed to the arrangement.

Because of that, we decided to celebrate my birthday today, though the actual day was tomorrow.

“Rekka-chan, do you want candles on your cake?”

“No.”

Because blowing out candles on a birthday cake just seemed so childish.

To be honest, I hadn’t even wanted to celebrate my birthday like this.

“Oh yeah. You didn’t invite Satsuki this year?”

“No. There’s something really important I have to tell Rekka-chan this year, so I didn’t invite her over.”

“...Humph.”

“Oh~, is Rekka-chan feeling lonely without Satsuki-chan?”

“What?! That’s not the case! Birthdays only come once a year, so I just feel bad for not inviting a neighbor.”

Besides, we'd celebrated birthdays together for the past ten years, so her absence now felt slightly strange.

"Is that so~?"

"Shut up. And stop grinning before I kick your ass."

"Alright alright. I'm sorry."

Why did I have to end up with such a frivolous old man? Not that I hate him, but I wish he could act more like an adult at times.

But the part about how he had "something really important" to tell me had captured my interest.

"So, what's this important thing you need to tell me?"

"Well, let's begin, then."

Taking a bite of parsley, my old man started to speak.

"In truth, those in the Namidare family have a special blood running in our veins."

"Special blood?"

"Yes. I guess you can call it the 'Namidare Lineage'. When a male Namidare turns sixteen, his disposition or special constitution or something awakens."

"I've never heard about this before... And special blood? That sounds like something a protagonist from a manga or novel would possess."

"How perceptive of you, Rekka-chan."

I was shocked by the sudden praise. How was I being perceptive?

"This 'special disposition' will turn Rekka-chan into a protagonist, just like those in a manga or novel."

"...You mean like I can travel to other dimensions?"

“Doesn’t everyone wish to do that? Though you may not be able to return once you get there.”

“Now that’ll be a headache...”

I’d concluded that my old man was just pulling my leg or spouting nonsense, and decided to play along.

“So, what exactly is this ‘Lineage’ about?” I asked seriously. Exposing the old man’s joke at this point would just spoil things, and that’s not how you cultivate a happy family.

“But it’s hard to explain what it is exactly-nyaa.”

“Don’t end your sentences with ‘nyaa’. It’s disturbing.”

“That’s what I was aiming for. Anyway, back on topic... That’s right. Try to imagine a ‘story’, be it a manga or novel, in which a prince saves a princess from a Demon King.”

“A ‘story’?”

“Yes. Now imagine, what if the prince loses to the Demon King? Or if there was no prince in the story to begin with? How do you think the story would end, Rekka-chan?”

“...Well, it’ll naturally have a bad ending, right?”

“Yes—. Now, we of the Namidare family will get dragged into these ‘stories’ which lack a protagonist. In short, these ‘stories’ are unimaginable scenarios which we need to be a part of.”

“‘Stories’, huh...?”

It sounded really abstract, but I felt like I understood the gist of it.

“To summarize, this ‘Lineage’ makes it really easy for us to be dragged into weird encounters, and that’s our family’s destiny?”

“And you’ll get to meet aliens and people from the future and mutants with superpowers and more-nyo.”

“Don’t end your sentences with ‘nyo’. And why would I want to meet such people?”

In fact, I had no wish to even be dragged into these “stories”. Not that I really believed such things could happen.

But as I munched on the lettuce in my salad, doubts kept surfacing in my mind.

Even if what the old man said was true, I would just ignore the “stories” and run away from them. And since he said that I would be “dragged” into the stories, it also meant that they were nothing but nuisances which had nothing to do with me, right? If that’s the case, I had no obligation or reason to lend anyone my help. Not that I would ever want to, anyway.

“What a tough destiny our family has.”

“Ha ha ha. You don’t believe me, do you, Rekka-chan?”

“Why would I ever believe such an absurd story? If it’s really true, then why aren’t you out there helping to maintain world peace right now, old man?”

My jolly old man, cheeks stuffed with chicken wings, looked just like a stay-at-home dad, and nothing else.

“According to our ancestors’ records, while it differs for each of us, we usually stop getting dragged into these ‘stories’ once we become adults.”

“How convenient for you then, old man.”

“You still don’t believe me... Oh well, not that I expected you to, until you’re really dragged into such a ‘story’ yourself... Anyway, you should be prepared for things to happen tomorrow, Rekka-chan.”

“If you say so.”

Finally, the nonsense was over.

Oh well, it was quite a fun conversation to add to the festive birthday mood.

“Oh, I almost forgot to mention.”

“What? There’s still more?”

“Yes, this is really important,” the old man said as he put down his chopsticks.

I looked up, and was shocked to see an utterly serious expression on the old man’s face as he stared at me. I sat up straighter in my chair.

“Rekka-chan, you’ll be going through tough times from now on. We are human, afterall, not real heroes, so we won’t be able to have a solution for everything. And it’s ok to run away if our lives are in peril...

However, I hope that you won’t mindlessly cast aside the ‘stories’ that you will be dragged into. Can you promise me that?”

I had not seen him so serious in a long while.

The last time I saw him this way was when I was still a boy...when we had spotted a cat in a cardboard box being swept down a river swollen with water.

While I panicked, pacing side to side not knowing what to do, my old man had quickly stripped off his clothes and jumped into the river without a second thought. After the rescue, he brought the weakened cat to the vet, and when it was nursed back to health, he went out of his way to find it a good home. Back then, my old man had seemed like a real hero.

“Alright, I promise, though I doubt anyone would want me as a hero,” I said, my mind still full of thoughts of my old man back then.

It didn’t matter that I still thought the whole story about the “Lineage” was just my old man’s fabrication.

At that moment, mum appeared in the dining room, presumably having finished packing for tomorrow.

“Sorry for waiting you wait—”

My mum is a beautiful woman, and that’s saying a lot coming from me, her son. Many people often mistake her for being ten years younger than her actual age, and it was a miracle how my old man managed to capture her heart.

“Took you long enough, Mama. The food’s almost all gone, and to think I put my heart into cooking it all.”

“That’s because I was packing your stuff too, Jigen-san.”

“That’s because you said you would pack my stuff for me, Mama.”

“That’s because you wouldn’t have been able to do it properly alone, Jigen-san.”

“Ha ha ha, sorry.”

Taking her usual seat, our harmonious family was together again, and because we would be separated tomorrow, there just seemed to be so much to talk about. Thus, the talk about the “Namidare Lineage” was pushed to the back of my mind...

PART 03

— —

...So why is R talking about my “blood” now too?

[Anyway, why are you talking about my ‘Lineage’?]

“Because Rekka-san is the most important person in the ‘All Of War’. I’ve done all my research on you, as well as the bloodline of the Namidare family.”

Whatever happened to privacy? But more importantly,

[What is this ‘All Of War’?]

“As its name suggests, it’s a battle that involves everything. I can’t tell you much about it.”

[Why not?]

“Because it’s got to do with my mission.”

[So it has something to do with saving the future?]

“Yes. You’ve heard about the ‘Namidare Lineage’ from your father, Namidare Jigen, last night, right?”

[Yep.]

“You still don’t fully believe in it now, but I’m going to tell you something which will prove that it’s all real. Please listen.”

R moved in midair to assume a kneeling position, probably to establish a serious mood.

“According to history from the future that I come from, Namidare Rekka is someone who had been dragged into many ‘stories’ to rescue many ‘heroines’.”

[‘Heroines’?]

“Heroines like a kingdom’s princess, or a mysterious beautiful transfer student. ‘Stories’ usually have their own ‘heroines’, right?”

Well, that’s true.

“By the way, Rekka-san,”

[?]

“Aside from being quite indecisive, you’re also really weak at rejecting girls, right?”

What is with this girl? Before I knew it, I’d gasped out loud. Oh no, don’t look at me like that, dude in glasses.

[W-well, there are some things which girls can’t do alone, right...? Does that really matter here?]

“Of course it matters. Rekka-san, in the future, you would rescue as many ‘heroines’ as there are stars in the sky, but having accomplished that, you would leave them alone... In the end, the neglected girls started to surround the future Rekka-san in a rage, and the war that occurs then is the ‘All Of War’.”

[Seriously?]

“Seriously. If not, I won’t be here right now, and the ‘All Of War’ won’t be happening too.”

[Wait a minute! My old man told me that I wouldn’t be dragged into anymore ‘stories’ once I became an adult?!]

“Even when you stop getting involved in the ‘stories’, the ‘heroines’ don’t just disappear, you know? And neither will their feelings. It’s really providence for them to feel that strongly about you.”

[.....]

“I told you, there’s no need to type that.”

But I’m just so overwhelmed that I can’t think of what to say. Can’t you be more sensitive of my delicate civilian’s heart?

[Well, why is such a huge war happening, anyway? It’s just a battle started by a bunch of girls, right? Why must it all lead to something as terrible as a war?]

“You’re too naive. According to the records, Rekka-san rescued hundreds of ‘heroines’ from different ‘stories’ in total. Though I didn’t share much details with you earlier, the ‘stories’ in which you did your rescues resemble manga and novel plots. Just imagine. What do you think would happen if all the characters from different story genres and perspectives come to fight on the same plane?”

[My imagination says that even a planet ten times the size of Earth would be destroyed without a trace.]

“So, isn’t that a little apocalyptic?”

Of course, all this is just a big what-if. But if this were to really happen... It’s almost unimaginable.

However, R is here, right before my eyes.

[Just for my sake, can you prove that you aren’t some 3D projection trick? May I touch you?]

“Of course you may. Touch me anywhere you like,” R exclaimed as she puffed out her chest.

Am I supposed to touch her there?

[Can we just shake hands?]

“Give me your left.”

shake shake

Yes, I can really touch her. So it is true that I’m the only one who can see and touch R, the only one who can hear her voice. Does that mean that the stories about “All Of War” and the “Namidare Lineage” are true too...?

“My mission is to tag along with Rekka-san and the ‘heroines’ in order to prevent the ‘All Of War’ from happening. I’ll be watching over Rekka-san until my mission is over, so do hurry and start seducing some ‘heroines’.”

“What do you mean, seduce?!”

No thanks to R’s blunt manner, I had spoken out loud again.

The stares from the dude in glasses and the teachers around just make me wish I didn’t exist.

PART 04

— —

Aside from my embarrassing outburst, the opening ceremony went on without a hitch, and the freshmen all filed to our respective homerooms where we had rounds of introductions. By afternoon, school was out.

“By the way, you mentioned that I will be rescuing people in ‘stories’ in the near future. Let’s just say I get dragged into something really complicated. I won’t end up losing my life, right?”

“Rekka-san, you’re such an idiot,” R sighed as she shook her head at me.

It seems like she can’t stay more than five meters away from me, so she has been tagging along no matter where I went. I wonder what would happen if I needed to visit the bathroom?

“I told you that I’ve come to alter the future, right? The moment I traveled back in time, the future has already changed. Thus, no one really knows if you’ll still be able to pull through and save those ‘stories’ the way you did in my version of the future.”

“Wait, that’s not very good news for me.”

“Anyway, Rekka-san is the reason why the future is messed up in the first place, so maybe it’ll be for the best if you inadvertently die along the way.”

“...I somehow don’t feel like helping you guys anymore.”

Today, my sixteenth birthday, my first day as a high school freshman, I’m finally living on my own... And now, I’ve been given no choice but to help save the future. The high expectations I had for my new life is slowly being crushed.

“Anyway, Rekka-san, your name just doesn’t sound very ambitious, nor are you very good-looking. I really wonder why all the girls seem to want to go after you.”

“Shut up.”

R’s words usually come as a veiled insult. I wonder if it’s just her personality, or something more sinister...

“Do you really hate me so much that you’d rather I die?”

“Who knows? I’m a Kikrum, an artificial being created just for this mission, so while I know lots about the future world, I don’t really have many feelings.”

“An artificial being? I see.”

“By the way, I’m two years old. If you touch me, you’ll be considered a pedophile.”

“You’re precocious for someone who probably still wears diapers.”

“How rude. I may look tough on the outside, but my underwear can be really sexy, you know. Wanna take a look?”

“No.”

So she is only two years old. Maybe that’s the reason why she’s so lacking in subtle expression and words?

Well, at least that explains her slightly unbalanced attitude towards me.

“Oh? What’s that, Rekka-san?”

R suddenly grabbed my head and forcefully turned it to the side, as she pointed to a small electronics store along the shopping district. A large TV sat in the display window of the store, and was showing the afternoon news.

“That’s a TV.”

“I know. But what is it showing?”

“Hmm? [Vast power outage in XX Town, residents claimed to see lightning strikes on a sunny day]?”

“I can hear them saying that. Is that what they call a news programme?”

“Huh, that? ...Well, I guess it is.”

So she was asking about the programme itself, not the content.

“So this is it... Rekka-san, come over here.”

I move closer to the TV set as R started to gaze at the screen intently from right to left.

“There’s no TV in the future?”

“How rude, of course there is. I know they exist, but this is the first time I’m actually seeing one. That’s because my mission doesn’t require me to come into contact with any of these.”

“...I see.”

R, who had been glancing over the TV set with sparkling eyes, seemed just like a child. I don’t know what exactly Kikrums are, but this one looks just like an ordinary little girl.

Though I guess she's never had the chance to experience ordinary things, like playing with friends, just for the sake of it.

What a strange life.

Though I'd love to believe her, it is hard to imagine myself as the cause of a messed up future... Just what were the adults in the future thinking, sending a little girl like her to settle this problem? She said that she was created for this purpose, but it just sounds too extraordinary. Then again, if the future is really in shambles, maybe it isn't too extraordinary after all.

But how can I take responsibility for a future I don't even know?

Yet R has been sent here, back to the past, and that at least is probably my fault. Besides, if I'm the only one who can touch and speak to R... If I'm the only one who can save the future... Well, I can't just ignore her, then. She may have a sharp tongue, but it can be charming as long as I remind myself that she's still a kid.

"I have a TV at home too, so you can watch that if you want. We can also get movies and dramas from the rental store if you like."

R, who had been captivated by the TV screen thus far, turned around to face me.

"...Really," she asked as she tilted her head to one side, her face expressionless as always. I wonder if it's just my imagination that she seemed happy somehow.



Oh well, not that it matters. I nodded.

“I’ll be living alone from now on, so let’s throw a mini-party to celebrate that. But I doubt you’d eat things like sweets. I’ll go rent lots of DVDs then.”

I knew it was a luxurious offer from a student without a part-time job like me, since I don’t have much cash. R stared at me dubiously.

“...Just saying, I’m not here to be your walk-through guide for life.”

My first time demonstrating a show of generosity in my life, and I’d been shot down by this harsh reaction.

“Don’t say silly things. Come, let’s go.”

With that, I took R’s hand and started walking. As she was floating in midair, it was a breeze pulling her along, and the palm of her hand felt warm.

Future world, special lineage; so many complicated things piling up, but we’ll worry about them later. Right now, the most important question is how I’m going to adapt to having this curious entity in my life.

~

And that was how I met R.

Since that moment, I’d already sunk one foot into an extraordinary life, much to my reluctance.

...I didn’t want to admit that soon, it would suck me in so deep, like a sticky swamp, that I wouldn’t be able to escape again.

Chapter 1: Multiple starting lines

PART 01

— —

1-1 SUMMONED BY A LETTER FROM A CHILDHOOD FRIEND

As I pulled today's newspaper which I'd forgotten to pick up that morning from my mail box, I found a letter stuck between the pages.

"Huh?"

"What's the matter?"

"Oh, it's a letter addressed to me... Hey, there's no stamp on this?"

So it was a letter posted personally to me. Who could it be from?

"Hmm, the sender is... Oh, it's Satsuki."

"A friend of yours?"

"A childhood friend. By the way, she wasn't there at the opening ceremony just now. I wonder what's up."

The Satsuki I knew wouldn't have missed it without a valid reason.

Fiddling with the letter, I opened the front door and kicked off my shoes.

"Is Satsuki-san a delinquent who usually skips school?"

"No. In fact, it's the opposite. She used to be the council president at our middle school."

"Ooh... Now that's strange."

"You have any idea about this?"

"Nope."

I always seem to fall for her tricks... Oh well, let's focus on the letter for now.

Throwing my bag onto the living room sofa, I tore open the envelope and watched as a pile of eraser dust poured out.

Opening up the neatly folded pages, I was greeted with Satsuki's familiar handwriting.

[To Namidare Rekka-sama. I have something really important to tell you. I thought about writing it down here, but I feel that it'll be better if we talk in person. I'll be waiting for you today at the place where we used to play as children. From Ootomo Satsuki.]

Her words were neatly written, as always.

But there were no traces of correction on the letter, despite the vast amount of eraser dust, which meant that she'd rewritten the same letter numerous times before posting it out. This didn't seem like her usual methodical self.

"What a vague letter. There's nothing important written on it," R, who had suddenly appeared by my side, commented as she peeked at the letter.

"She said she'll tell me more when we meet up."

"So you're going now?"

"She said that she'll be waiting there today. She can be really stubborn if she wants to, so she'll probably wait all day if I don't show up."

"But Rekka-san, you must be tired from attending the opening ceremony, right? I'm sure you can take a short break first..."

What's with her? Why is she suddenly acting so concerned about me? ...Oh.

"Don't tell me you're dying to watch TV."

"...I didn't say that."

“Sorry, but that’ll have to wait. I’ll stay in all weekend to watch it with you.”

“I told you, it doesn’t matter to me.”

“Then don’t pout.”

“I’m not pouting—”

But she still looks quite unhappy.

Oh well, guess I’ll really have to spend my weekend watching TV with her.

With my mind full of the DVDs we’ll rent, R and I left the house together.

PART 02

— —

The place where Satsuki and I used to hang out is an abandoned factory that sits atop a small hill, just a fifteen minute cycle away from my place.

Upon reaching it, I looked at my watch. It was just after 1 p.m.

“...Just what does Satsuki want?”

“Took you long enough to ask. Well, Rekka-san, why don’t we go and ask her right now?”

“I was just wondering what’s so important that it made her skip the opening ceremony.”

“Oh dear, Rekka-san, you’re really not very bright,” R sighed.

“Not very bright?”

"That means you're thick-headed. A girl you've known since forever writes you a letter, asking you to meet at a spot full of memories. There's only one reason she would do this... She's going to confess her feelings."

"Huh?"

"Whoa, don't look at me like that. It was just an educated guess."

"That wasn't educated, idiot."

My relationship with Satsuki isn't like that.

"We've been friends for over ten years. We're almost like family."

"...I'm suddenly not so sure that my mission will succeed anymore."

"Why? ...Whatever, let's go."

I locked up my bicycle and headed for the factory's back door.

This dilapidated factory had been off-limits ever since I was a child, but the lock on one of the back doors had rusted away, and we'd always entered the building that way.

As expected, nobody had replaced the lock, and I entered the building where I used to play as a kid.

"It's dark inside."

"You can sense the darkness?"

"I have five senses just like a human being."

"Hmm, I was wondering if your eyes could light up in darkness."

"Then I won't be able to see anything."

That's true.

We waited till our eyes adjusted to the darkness before moving further into the building. Satsuki and I used to play in a large room at the back,

which could be reached by walking a ways down a dusty corridor. Maybe it's because I hadn't been here in a while, but the place looked even more rundown than before.

It took some effort to remember the route, but we reached the room safely. It was probably filled with conveyor belts and huge machines when the factory was in operation, but now, everything had been demolished, leaving a room as large as a school gym.

Unlike the corridor we had just passed through, the room had windows, and the sunlight from outside lit up the place brightly. Even so, it was still a little dim, but I could make out the outline of a girl standing in the middle of the room, back facing us, right away.

"Satsuki."

Her shoulders jumped when I called out, before Satsuki turned around.

Dressed in drab clothes, with straight black hair that had never been dyed or permed, my childhood friend had never been good with fashion or putting on make-up. Even so, she spent much time every day tending her beautiful black hair, and I knew she considered it her best feature.

Satsuki showed me her usual, calm smile.

"Good morning, Rekka."

"G-good morning... But isn't it time to say good afternoon? Why didn't you attend the opening ceremony...? Oh, by the way, we're in the same class again this year."

"I see. So it's still the same."

"It's as if someone wants to keep us together... By the way, how long have you been here?"

"Since this morning."

"I knew it."

See? This girl would have waited here all day for me to come.

“Sorry, I forgot to check my mail box this morning.”

“Would you have come right away if you had seen the letter?”

“Of course.”

“I see. That’s wonderful.”

“Huh?”

Hey hey, of course I would have come. Why did she look so relieved, like she hadn’t expected me to?

Something... didn’t feel right.

“So... What did you want to say to me?”

“Yes... You may not believe what I’m going to tell you, but... I’m actually...”

Satsuki stopped speaking, glancing around us furtively.

Just what does she want to say? I didn’t know why, but I felt a little nervous.

R remained silent, probably not wishing to speak.

Then, just as Satsuki was about to continue...the building started to shake violently.

“!?”

All three of us gasped at the same time as the windowpanes of the abandoned factory shattered with loud cracking sounds.

Suddenly, the shaking subsided, and silence descended upon the building once again. Dust was flying everywhere, though the roof didn’t look like it was about to collapse... I think.

“That wasn’t an earthquake, right...? Whoa!”

I realized that in our panic, I had grabbed Satsuki into an embrace to protect her without noticing it.

“Satsuki, are you OK?” I asked, trying to diffuse the awkward situation.

There was no reply.

Oh no. Should I apologize for suddenly embracing her...? I looked into Satsuki’s face.

“.....”

Even in the dim light, I could tell that she was ghastly pale.

Her teeth were chattering.

“Oi, Satsuki? What’s wrong?”

Just as I was about to pat Satsuki on the shoulder,

“Young man, could you please leave her alone?”



PART 03

— —

“Young man, could you please leave her alone?”

A bright voice called out, sounding as if the speaker was reciting from a script.

I turned around to see a man with blonde hair and blue eyes, dressed in expensive-looking clothes and a wine-colored cloak draped over his shoulders, standing behind us.

He seemed to give off...a strange aura. And where did he come from?

I shifted to shield Satsuki with my body as I glared at the man.

“Who are you?”

“And who are you? Shouldn’t you introduce yourself before asking the name of another? That’s what I learned when I was researching your country’s culture, preparing for when I would come to get her.”

“I’m Namidare Rekka, Satsuki’s childhood friend.”

“Oh...” The man exclaimed in a showy voice as he nodded.

“So, who are you?”

“Oh dear, how hostile of you. I don’t think I’ve done anything to warrant such attitude.”

“You’ve scared Satsuki.”

“She scared herself. Why would I do anything to harm my precious bride?”

“Huh? What?”

“My bride—. She will be the bride of Messiah Candystaps; the woman who will grant me omnipotent knowledge.”

...I don't get half of what he's trying to say.

Just then, a few pieces of debris landed on the man's shoulder.

".....?"

A hole in the roof?

Countless cracks ran across the concrete roof of the factory, converging upon a hole large enough to fit a person right above the Messiah guy. It seems as if he had created the hole to enter this room.

...Is he an idiot? He should be gravely injured after falling from such a height. Anyway, just how did he make such a large hole in the roof?

But there was no doubt that the hole was connected to his presence.

"...You're not an ordinary human, are you?"

Just what are you...? At that moment, it surfaced from the back of my mind.

The "Namidare Lineage".

According to my old man and R, I have special blood running in my veins.

There must be some connection between that and what was happening now.

"Alright, now that the introductions are over, would you step away please, young man?"

"No."

"Oh, why is that?"

"I told you, you're scaring Satsuki. Anyway, why is Satsuki your bride?"

"My relationship with her has nothing to do with you."

"It has everything to do with me, you bastard. She's my childhood friend. We're so close that we even know how many moles the other has on their body. It'll be different if you can make Satsuki happy, but I don't think that's the case. If you're going to force Satsuki to do things against her will, then of course I'll be here to protect her."

"Rekka..."

Satsuki whispered from behind me. Her teeth had stopped chattering.

"...It seems like you'll be causing me some trouble, young man."

Suddenly, Messiah pointed a finger at me.

"—Messiah!"

Satsuki let out a cry, as if deterring the man from doing something, just as a powerful impact hit me in the side.

The force knocked me into the air, before I slammed into the dirty wall of the factory.

"Urgh!"

I let out a grunt as the hit knocked the air from my lungs.

"Rekka!"

"Don't move an inch, daughter of Creation."

Messiah's words stopped Satsuki in her tracks as she made to run to me. What did he just call her? Daughter of Creation?

"Uuh... You're definitely not an ordinary human."

Just then, a sharp pain ran through my back and left side as a weird shock overwhelmed my body, causing my muscles to spasm.

What is happening...? What is he doing to me?

"Oh dear, are you alright, Rekka-san?"

“R...”

That’s right. R said that she can’t move more than five meters away from me. I wonder if she was dragged through the air with me when Messiah’s attack flung me across the room.

“Oi, what did Messiah do to me?”

“By right, I’ve been programmed to be fair in my treatment of all the ‘heroines’ you meet. Speaking arbitrarily, if I render aid to any ‘heroine’, the action could change the future. That’s why I won’t be able to help you in any of the ‘stories’.”

“...So you won’t help me because that guy is a villain in one of those ‘stories’ my old man said I’ll be dragged into?”

“Wow, you learn fast. So you can be smart despite being an idiot, Rekka-san... True, due to my mission, I can tell when you’ve been dragged into a ‘story’.”

“Can you tell me that now?”

“Yes, but only if it will not affect the story’s ‘resolution’.”

It seems like I won’t be receiving any help from R, nor will I get any information about the “daughter of Creation” from her.

But what was that? Messiah hadn’t touched me at all. It was as if he’d used magic— Wait, could it be...real magic?

That’s a wizard right there. Old man, this is really starting to sound like a manga or novel plot.

But magic is just too much. Even without trying to come up with rational explanations, such things definitely are extraordinary. My beloved ordinary life is finally being utterly destroyed... Damn it.

“Oh, can you stand?”

“Of course. I have to protect Satsuki.”

To be honest, my body felt exhausted, but I ordered my limbs to push myself up.

"I don't really get what's happening, but if Satsuki is in danger, I won't hesitate to help her."

"...Oh?"

I heard R heave a sigh, either in annoyance or resignation, as I finally pulled myself to my feet.

"Oi, sorry to keep you waiting, bastard!"

I shouted as I hurled a metal pipe I had picked up at Messiah, but the pipe bounced away harmlessly before the wizard, repelled by some unseen force.

"Oh, you're really hardy."

Messiah whispered as he turned around, sounding like he was praising an infant.

"That's my line."

"Well, a Defense Barrier surrounds my body at all times, so such things will never hurt me."

"You're a filthy cheat..."

I taunted, trying to buy some time, though I knew he suspected that was what I was doing.

"Rekka!"

Satsuki suddenly called out as she tossed a palm-sized object towards me.

I grabbed the object. It turned out to be her mobile phone.

"Take that and run! I'll be alright!"

“No!”

Is this supposed to be a momento? There’s no way someone who’s as bad at sports as you is going to match up to a wizard like Messiah.

Watching our argument, Messiah laughed lowly.

“I knew you would be a major obstacle between us. Since you’re so ready to die for her, why don’t I grant your wish?”

Messiah raised his hand above his head, and the air suddenly shivered before bursting into sparks. The sparks soon grew into tiny lightning bolts, dancing in the air like writhing snakes. The snakes then wound together, becoming a dazzling mass of light.

Or a ball of lightning.

I could find no other words to describe what I saw as it swelled even larger, eventually growing to a size large enough to engulf a human.

“I’ll leave no trace of you, so don’t worry. Nobody will ever know how tragic your death is.”

“I don’t need your concern...”

Seems like Messiah really is a wizard.

My instincts were telling me to run, and to be completely honest, I was terrified. I would definitely die if Messiah threw that thing at me.

But to abandon Satsuki and escape; how would I ever live with myself...?!

Standing firm on my trembling legs, I refused to budge.

Damn it. I don’t even understand what the “Namidare Lineage” is all about, and I’ve already been thrown into such a huge challenge.

Just as I was cursing my fate...

“Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

As if to further complicate matters, “something” chose that exact moment to fall upon us from the sky.

PART 04

— —

1-2 A GIRL FALLS FROM THE SKY

That “something” fell into the room amidst a ton of rubble, probably after it landed on the dilapidated and weakened roof of the building.

A quarter of the ceiling had caved in, most of it right on top of Messiah. The commotion had also stirred up the dirt accumulated on the floor over the years, blanketing the entire room in a curtain of dust.

“Oof! What’s happening?”

Messiah’s angry bellow came from the other side of the dust cloud. Isn’t he dead after being buried under so much rubble...?

Anyway, this is our best chance of escape!

Pocketing Satsuki’s phone, I immediately rushed towards her.

Moving within the dust cloud, I shuffled to where I remembered seeing Satsuki last. Unable to see more than ten centimeters before me, I finally managed to make out her shadow.

“Over here! Let’s go!”

“Huh?”

I heard her exclaim something, but in my panic, I blocked out her voice and ran towards the back door of the factory, dragging her along.

Crashing our way through, we finally burst out of the building, where I continued to drag her down the hill.

“I’ll protect you with my life!”

I panted out at Satsuki, trying to distract both of our attention from the terrifying situation at hand. If not, I might probably stand rooted to the spot in fear. Halfway down the hill, I remembered that I had cycled my way here, but it was too late to go back and retrieve the bicycle, so I continued running.

I wonder how long we continued running as I shouted encouragement back at her time and again.

Because otherwise, I didn’t really have a clue how I could help her.

We ran until the hill with the abandoned factory was out of sight before I finally stopped.

pant pant

My mouth felt like a desert. I desperately needed a drink.

Either way, it didn’t look like Messiah had given chase, so we were safe for now.

Just then, “Satsuki” asked in an unfamiliar voice,

“H-hey, what is your name?”

“Huh?”

I whirled around in shock to find a strange girl holding my hand.

“Hey, I asked for your name. N-A-M-E. Tell me now.”

“Na...Namidare... Rekka,” I answered, dumbfounded.

“Namidare Rekka... I’ll call you Rekka, then.”

The mystery girl repeated my name with a smile.

...Wait. What is happening here?

Just then, R floated into my line of sight with an answer.

“Rekka-san grabbed the wrong girl back there in the dust cloud.”

Seriously? But where did this girl — ... Oh, she must be the “something” that fell through the roof.

That’s right. I recall hearing a girl screaming right before that “something” came through the ceiling.

“...Hey — Hello? Are you listening to me?”

“Huh? No, what is it?”

“Honestly! Here I am telling you my name, so can’t you listen up?”

The girl, with silver hair tied in twin tails that reached all the way to her feet, humphed in anger.

Then, she placed a hand on the bosom of her frilly, strange-looking dress, and puffed out her chest.

“My name is Iris Pheneritas Psyfacor, the only daughter of the chief of planet Phenerita’s council ‘Owaria’. I’m not really the type of person that any commoner from some godforsaken planet can touch, so I think you should feel honored.”

“Huh?! Oh, sorry!”

Realizing that our hands were still connected, I hurriedly loosened my grip.

“Don’t be silly. I said, you should feel honored, not sorry. Anyway, I’ll forgive you this time because it’s special.”

So saying, Iris grabbed my hand again as she smiled at me.

Her grip this time was strong as she shook my hand painfully, but it was still a girl's hand, and its softness flustered me.

"W-why is this time special?"

"Because Rekka rescued me from my pursuers."

"...Huh?"

What is she talking about?

"If I may hazard a guess, Iris-san was being pursued by some people too. During the chase, she fell through the roof of the abandoned factory. Then, Rekka-san grabbed her hand and both of you escaped the place together, giving her the wrong idea that you had rescued her?"

R kindly explained the situation before my head exploded from all the confusion.

"H-hey, I..."

"And you told me that you'll protect me with your life... Kyaa! I never thought I would meet a guy who would say such things!"

Iris placed her hand -the one not currently holding mine- to her own cheek as she swayed sheepishly from side to side. It seems like R's guess was right.

"Ha, ha ha ha."

There were so many misunderstandings going on here, but I didn't have the heart to correct her.

But now I'd abandoned Satsuki back at the factory. I needed to get back there as soon as I could.

Just as I was about to explain the situation to Iris, she beat me to it.

"Yep! I've decided! Rekka— I'll make you my lover!"

“Huuuuuh?!”

Doesn't such a decision usually warrant more time and consideration!?

“If I can show Papa that I have a lover, maybe he'll stop talking about that stupid marriage proposal. Alright, since that's decided, let's go!”

Having made up her mind, the young lady pulled out a mysterious item from the pouch hanging from her shoulder. It looked like a make-up compact, and when she opened it, I spotted a number of buttons within, one of which she pressed with a slim finger.

Suddenly, darkness fell upon us, and I looked up to see a huge flying machine hovering directly above us.

“That's a U... U...!”

“Yes, it's a UFO.”

I was at a loss for words, as R completed the sentence for me.

Iris pressed another button, and a strange light shone from the UFO down onto us...as I felt myself floating up into the light.

Am I going to be mutilated like cattle!? And now that I've finally noticed, is that a tail growing out from Iris' bottom!? Huh, this can't be real. Is she an alien!?

“W-wait a second! What about my opinion—!?”

“You said you'd protect me with your life, right? Then you'll have to pose as my lover for now, OK?”

“But it's all a misunderstanding!”

My body, together with my shouts of protest, were soon swallowed up by the light.

PART 05

— —

“...Nngh.”

“Oh, you’re awake.”

Did I lose consciousness? How did I end up in this unfamiliar room...? There were several cockpit chairs scattered around the tiny place, which had two small windows and a dull silver ceiling and floor, the latter upon which I had been lying.

“You really scared me there. I guess Earthling bodies just aren’t strong enough to adjust to drastic changes in G-force. By the way, you were really dirty, so I cleaned you up and dressed you in new clothes,” Iris smiled widely as she spoke, her face mere inches from my own... Anyway, why did the back of my head feel so soft when I’m lying on the hard floor?

“W-whoa!”

“What’s wrong? Is there something wrong with lying on my lap?”

L-l-lying on her lap!? The ultimate male fantasy!?

I knew my face was burning red, and it only got worse when I caught myself staring at Iris’ legs. Had I really been lying on those bare thighs...?

I cast my eyes downward, and spotted her wagging tail. It was slightly bushy like a horse’s, and silver, just like her hair. While I found it really cute, it was also concrete proof that she was not a creature from Earth.

“No. Where are we, anyway?”

I finally replied her.

“Inside the spaceship.”

“Not that! I meant, where is the spaceship now?”

I moved to the spaceship’s window and peered outside.

We appeared to be flying through an undulating rainbow-colored space.

“Is this outerspace...?”

“We’re in a warp zone, headed to planet Phenerita now. We’ll be there in about three hours, I think.”

“Three hours!? That’s not good! Get us back to Earth at once!”

Satsuki is in danger. I need to go rescue her right away!

“Can’t do that,” Iris replied heartlessly. “We can only travel in a single direction in warp zones. Once we enter one, there’s no way to stop until we reach our destination. We can head back once we reach Phenerita.”

“B-but...”

I sat down heavily on the floor, knees weak.

“Hey, is something wrong?”

Yes, something is wrong! ...My mind was full of rage, but my body too exhausted to summon the energy to shout at her.

Then again, it was my fault for mistaking Iris for Satsuki back there...

sigh

But lamenting wouldn’t do me any good. I just needed to pray that Satsuki stays safe until we exit this warp, and I beg Iris to bring us back.

However, no matter how much we hurry, it would be at least six hours before I could be back on Earth... Things were really looking bleak.

Watching me sigh, Iris started to pout again.

“Seriously, can’t you look a little happier?! How can I introduce you to Papa when you look all gloomy?”

“Huh? Introduce me? To your Papa?”

“Yes. I’m going to introduce Rekka as my lover to Papa.”

“...Why are we doing this again?”

“So that Papa would give up on the idea of marrying me to the king of Satamonial!”

“Why?”

Iris glared at me resentfully.

“Because I never agreed to the marriage! It was a one-sided proposal from that disgusting Satamonian king, and Papa agreed to it because he didn’t want to anger that man. It’s a dirty political marriage, and I’m going to be the sacrifice!”

“Well, that’s an awful tale, but is it really that unadvisable to get that Satamonian king mad?”

“Hmm, the Great Galaxy Commonwealth... Well, I guess Rekka’s never heard about it. Anyway, it functions like an intergalactic government, made up of chosen representatives from 72 planets, of which my home planet Phenerita holds one seat. And because it’s a governing body, there are many political bodies and factions formed within the group of 72.”

“I’m guessing the king of Satamonial heads one of the more powerful factions?”

“Yes. He’s the evil, violent head of the faction that initiates armed struggles. And there’s just so many dark rumors about him, like how he sends troops to planets in the remote regions of the galaxy just to conquer them. Just hearing these rumors makes me sick.”

The Satamonian king was really starting to sound like a lowlife bastard.

“Either way, I won’t ever agree to marrying someone like him!!”

“Whoa!”

Why was she suddenly embracing me!?

“That is why I need Rekka to be my lover and mess up all his plans.”

Her soft, coaxing voice tickled my ear, and those two soft mounds pressing against my back... are so bouncy! My mind was in a whirl.

“But, why me...?”

“Because you said you would help me, right? And when you held my hand and pulled me along, I just thought you were so cool. Anyway, you should feel really honored that I’m letting you be my lover, even though it’s just an act.”

“A-alright, I get it. Now let go...”

“Why??” Iris asked with a smile, her head tilted to one side, as if her body wasn’t pressed right up against mine.

Please stop pushing those soft things into me!

Huh? So what? Must I really act as Iris’ lover in order to prevent this political marriage? No, I need to rescue Satsuki from Messiah as soon as possible, but her squishies are squashing against me... Arrgh, I can’t think like this!

I needed to make her let go of me if I wished to focus on a plan.

“Sorry, but is there anything to drink around here? I’m quite thirsty.”

“Oh! That’s right, we did run quite away back there. Wait a second, I’ll be right back.”

Finally, Iris let me go and left through a sliding door to go find some refreshments.

PART 06

— —

“...Alright. R.”

“Yes?”

R, who had been lounging in midair all this while, raised her hand in greeting.

“Can I ask you a question?”

“OK, as long as it doesn’t interfere with a story’s ‘resolution’.”

“Alright. Let’s say, for example... Am I currently being dragged into someone’s ‘story’?”

“I wonder if you’re asking about Iris-san.”

“And what about Satsuki? Is she alright?”

“I can’t answer that, but if you’re asking if you had been dragged into Satsuki-san’s ‘story’, then the answer is yes.”

Shit, I knew it.

“So I’ve been dragged into both Satsuki and Iris’ ‘stories’ at the same time?”

“Rekka-san, aren’t you popular, worming your way into all these ‘stories’.”

“Don’t make it sound so bad!”

A childhood friend and an alien girl. Expecting me to rescue them both is just asking too much!

“Well, at least I’m feeling slightly more relieved now, after witnessing that Rekka-san can, afterall, blush and get all flustered around ‘heroines’.”

Oops... Now that I think about it, R must have witnessed me lying on Iris’ lap, and her embracing me.

“Honestly, Rekka-san, I think you overreacted slightly to those situations.”

“Well, I’m sure every guy would have done the same if he was in my position!”

But R only smiled knowingly at my argument.

“Seriously... Anyway, what do you think of Iris?”

“I’m not into yuri.”

“That’s not what I meant!”

“I was just joking. What I think about her? Well, I think she’s a straightforward girl who knows what she wants and isn’t afraid to voice out her likes and dislikes. You may call her selfish or childish, but I think she is quite innocent too.”

Hmm, R’s impression of Iris more or less matched up with my own.

“Either way, she is quite childish. I can’t yet tell if that’s a good thing or not.”

“Though she obviously doesn’t possess the body of a child.”

“Shut up!”

“Doesn’t the sight of those breasts make you want to rescue her?”

“It’s not like that!”

Just as I was raising my voice, the door slid open to reveal Iris.

“What’s not like what?”

“Oh, it’s nothing!” I hurriedly lied, since it was obvious that Iris could not see R.

“Here. Have some juice.”

The orange-colored drink she passed to me tasted like some sports drink. The liquid flowed down my throat and soon sated my thirst.

“Wow, this tastes really good.”

“Really? That’s great.”

Iris smiled at my honest critique.

I felt like I was really going to fall for her soon.

“What’s wrong??”

“Oh, it’s nothing!”

“You said that just now too.”

Up till yesterday, all the interaction with females I’ve had in my life was limited to Satsuki and mum, so all these encounters were just coming too fast! I’m just not used to this!

As I gulped down the drink in an attempt to hide my red face, Iris latched on to me again. Her breasts pressed up against my back, almost causing me to spit out my juice.

“Hey, are you free?”

“Huh? I guess I am. Erm, could you let go...?”

I twisted my body in a nonchalant manner, trying to escape her grasp, but her hands, which were resting on my shoulders, refused to budge. I wonder if Pheneritans were stronger than Earthlings?

“Then I’ll show you around the spaceship. Rekka’s home planet... Earth, right? Since you don’t have the technology to build spaceships there yet, I’m sure you’ll enjoy the tour.”

“Alright. I get it, now let me go...”

Finally, Iris released me, and I returned the favor by letting her bring me around the spaceship.

It appeared that the only unadorned room was the one with the cockpit chairs from which we came. The rest of the rooms were painted in pink, beige, or other similar pastel colors, filled with machinery which I’d never seen before and lots of girlish furnishings. Seems like alien girls share the same taste as those from Earth.

The last room she brought me to was a tiny one at the back of the spaceship.

“This is?”

“Hmm, I guess it’s like a storage room.”

The door slid open with a swoosh, and we entered the place.

It was like a storage room, with lots of things scattered around.

While most of the items looked so unfamiliar that I had no idea what they were used for, there were several items which caught my interest.

“What’s this?”

“It’s a warp watch, a device that can teleport you through hyperspace.”

“Ooh.”

The device resembled an ordinary watch.

“Would you like to try it on?”

“Can I?”

With Iris' permission, I slipped on the warp watch. It fastened into place just like how a normal watch would.

Hmm? Could I warp back to Earth with this...?

"Hey, how exactly do you use this warp watch?"

"It's really simple. You switch it on by pressing that side button, and once the screen lights up, you just need to key in the coordinates of your desired destination."

"Coordinates?"

"Based on an axis which you construct from your current location."

.....But I'm horrible at math.

"Since the device is small, you can't warp to distances more than a few hundred kilometers away. The teleportable mass is also limited to one or two people, and small items you are carrying."

Which means I couldn't use it to return to Earth.

I let out a small sigh, before picking up another item which looked like a gun.

"What about this?"

"...It's a laser gun."

I knew it. It looked just like something I'd once seen in a sci-fi movie. How cool.

As I fawned over the laser gun, I noticed Iris puffing out her cheeks in annoyance next to me. Have I done something wrong?

"Erm... You look grumpy. What's wrong?"

"...I hate that thing, because it's manufactured in Satamonía. It's really powerful, and if it falls into the hands of savage aliens..."



“Oh, I see.”

Seems like Iris really hates that Satamonian king.

I pitied her for being forced into a marriage with such a man.

But... Compared to the danger Satsuki was currently facing, Iris' situation didn't seem as hopeless. I imagine that I'd be too busy dealing with Messiah to even think of sticking my nose into Iris' business.

“.....”

I could feel Satsuki's mobile phone in my pocket.

I don't want it to become a memento.

Just as I was about to tell Iris that I wanted to go rescue my childhood friend first, a green flame suddenly started burning in the room.

“Wahh!?”

“Huh?! What is this? Hey, Rekka!”

Iris backed away in shock as she screamed my name.

“W-what is this?”

It looked just like fire, but... it wasn't hot at all?

The mysterious flame(?) slowly grew and engulfed me, lifting myself and R up into the air.

“R!”

“Oh dear. This looks bad.”

Don't sound so calm! Can't you panic together with me!?

Just then, the green flame turned into a white light which flooded the entire room as I was swallowed into a white world.

“Rekka!”

Iris’ voice was the last thing I heard.

Then, with a strange floating feeling, I moved across “something” and entered another dimension.

PART 07

— —

1-3 SUMMONED TO ANOTHER WORLD

In the blink of an eye, I felt the brightness quickly fade from behind my eyelids. The weird floating feeling was gone as well.

Does that mean the strange experience was over?

I slowly opened my eyes, terrified of what I would see... I wonder how many more shocks were installed for me today.

The scene before me had transformed from the futuristic interior of the spaceship to a large ancient-looking hall with stone walls.

The place was decorated with lots of grand furnishings, the floor carpeted with lush rugs. However, I seemed to be sitting at a place some distance from the floor.

Gathered before me were a bunch of old men, dressed in what seemed to be European-style clothes from the Middle Ages, staring at me in curiosity. Just what is happening here?

“Who is that?” “I’ve never seen anyone dressed that way before.”

“Did it work?” “It can’t be!”

“There’s no other explanation. It worked.” “But he’s just a youth.”

"I don't think heroes have an age limit." "So is he really our hero?"

"Hero..." "Hero..."

Just what are they whispering about? It sounded like dialogue one would usually find in a video game.

"Hero-sama!"

Just then, I heard a loud voice, before a young girl leaped into my arms. She looked to be about thirteen or fourteen years of age. Her tiny body was dressed in a robe, leaving nothing exposed. Her pale blonde hair glinted as she rubbed her head against my chest.

Suddenly, she raised her head, and the expression on her face gave me a shock.

Large drops of tears were falling from her eyes.

"Huh? W-why are you crying?"

"Hero-sama! Please tell us your name?"

Ignoring my question, the girl shot her own back at me in a bright voice.

I guess she was crying with joy, not sorrow, and heaved a sigh of relief.

"I'm Namidare Rekka... So, where is this place?" I answered her, posing a question at the same time.

"Namidare Rekka... So hero-sama's name is Rekka-sama!"

"I'm... a hero?"

Hero? That sounds wonderful, but where exactly is this place!?

Just as I was about to panic, the cruel universe gave me an answer.

"Your Majesty! The hero's name is Namidare Rekka-sama!"

"Huh? Your Majesty?"

I followed the girl's gaze... and spotted him; an imperial man who looked every inch like royalty, seated on a magnificent throne. The crown on his head declared his status for all to see.

"Oh, yes... So the legend passed down in the royal family are true."

The king looked impressed. I remained speechless, a sense of foreboding welling up within me.

"Welcome to our world, hero! Please help us defeat the Demon King terrorizing our kingdom of Abraham!"

...Oh, thanks for the finishing blow. I finally realized what was happening.

"I see. So I'm being dragged into another 'story' involving heroes and Demon Kings!"

I was already overwhelmed by wizards and aliens, but here I am, being summoned to another world. Just spare me already.

"Good luck."

While I was on the verge of clutching my head out of despair, R, who was sitting cross-legged in midair, seemed perfectly calm, as if my predicament didn't bother her the slightest bit.

But I couldn't be calm. The hundreds of people gathered around the hall had frighteningly joyful expressions on their faces as they inched closer...closer...ever closer to me. I won't be surprised if they were all itching to embrace me the way the girl had. Huge muscular guy over there, please don't do it.

"Harissa, is our hero alright?"

The king aimed the question at the girl. He must have thought I was in shock, seeing as to how I had not said anything apart from introducing myself.

The girl, Harissa, gazed up at me through her lashes. She had beautiful cerulean blue eyes.

“Hero-sama. Please let me know if you need anything.”

“Anything? You mean, anything?”

“Yes!”

Then I had one request.

“I’m begging you...let me get some rest. Please.”

Chapter 2: I’m just a Level 1 Villager, can I defeat the Demon King?

PART 01

— —

Perhaps it was the fervent nature of my request that saw me ushered into a huge guest room with a canopy bed by the king and his subjects.

Plopping down onto the bed, I heaved a sigh.

“Hero-sama! Is there anything else you need?” Harissa asked with an energetic smile.

“No, everything’s fine. May I be left alone?”

“No problem!” Harissa replied happily, before relaying my request to the servant girls waiting out in the hallway.

‘How young she is~’

Watching her leave, this old man’s thought ran through my mind.

“Rekka-san, do you like naïve girls like her?”

“No comment.”

With that smooth quip to R’s question, my mind drifted back to my current predicament again... and I clutched my head in frustration.

Wizards, aliens, otherworldly beings. It would be tough dealing with any one of them, but to have all three piled upon me at once! What can I do?

If I include R, the entity from the future, it’ll be four different problems. Besides, the “All Of War”’s going to happen in the future, so what’s happening now would hardly have an impact on that. At this point, that does seem like the only saving grace.

“Arggh— ... Seriously. What should I do?”

“Since we’re already here in this other world, you’d have to resolve this ‘story’ first.”

“I don’t have time for that. Why should I stick my nose into the business of this other world, anyway? And Satsuki may be in great danger now. If I don’t get back to our world right now...”

My hands on my watch appeared to move at the exact same speed in this world, which meant that it should be about 2 p.m. back on Earth right now. I remember reaching the abandoned factory at 1 p.m., so Satsuki had been left alone with Messiah for almost an hour.

Messiah had said that Satsuki was to be his bride, so he probably would not hurt or kill her... But I still need to return to our world to make sure that she was safe.

As I was panicking, R was looking at me quizzically for some reason.

“So you’re planning to return to your world and let this one perish?”

“But I have no choice. I’m just part of the ‘Lineage’. It doesn’t grant me any special powers, nor does it make me any different from everyone else. I can’t save this world.”

"Do you really believe that?" R continued, insistent.

"Do you believe I should?"

"No, but if Rekka-san were to abandon this 'story'..."

Before R could finish her sentence, Harissa returned from the hallway.

"Hero-sama? Were you speaking with someone?"

"No. You must be imagining things."

"Oh, I must have misheard, then! I'm really terrible with that. When I was young, I once mistook my grandpa's snoring as the roaring of a dragon, which caused chaos throughout the entire village!"

Is that something you should be recounting with such happiness?

Harissa trotted over and sat down beside me. S-so close...

"Hero-sama! Is there anything you need from me?"

"Not really."

"But it can't be! His Majesty ordered me to take care of you. Please give me an order, I'll do anything!"

"...OK, why don't you sit a little further away?"

"I-I'm sorry! I was so excited that I didn't realize I've come so close! I must stink." Harissa exclaimed as she jumped away from me.

"No, I didn't request that because you stink..."

"It's OK! I'm just a commoner, so it's actually an honor for me to even be here like this. So I must surely be giving out a horrible commoner's stench from my armpits!! But that's because I'm speaking with hero-sama, and it's really making me sweat!"

...I'm guessing deodorant has not been invented in this world.

That aside, this girl, Harissa, seemed to be the one who summoned me to this world.

Which meant that the fastest way for me to return to my world was to garner her help...

"Erm, there's something I'd like to ask."

"Yes! What is it, hero-sama?!"

I can't say that when you're looking at me with such sparkly eyes... But I need to say it.

"Please send me back to my world."

".....Huh?"

Yes, I was expecting that answer.

"There's no way I can defeat a Demon King. And I'm not a hero."

Yes, I'm just an ordinary person. If I was a character in a game, I'd probably be a random villager.

"...B-but! Rekka-sama was summoned by the legendary spell passed down through the Abraham royalty. According to the legend, our hero would emerge from a dazzling light..."

"Sorry, but it's just that my physical constitution makes it really easy for me to be dragged into things. Please find yourselves another hero."

"No... You're lying."

"I'm not."

"No, you must be... Rekka-sama is our hero. You must be. If not, I'll be in trouble."

"....."

Such words do nothing but make my heart wrench.

But there is someone I really needed to protect.

“Your problem has nothing to do with me. I don’t have the time. Send me back to my world now!”

“Gasp...!”

My angry outburst caused Harissa to recoil in shock.

Her smile, as bright as the Sun, disappeared, and was replaced by tears.

“~~~Jearim Neckrum!” She chanted, lips trembling.

Suddenly, she disappeared before my eyes.

“What? Harissa?”

I couldn’t see her, but I could hear the sound of footsteps running away from me. Then, the door opened on its own, and the footsteps escaped out into the hallway.

“...Did she just turn herself invisible?”

“Who knows,” R, who had drifted into the floor so her face rested on the stone like some freshly severed head, answered nonchalantly.

Left without a choice, I decided to ask R for help.

“Do you know of a way to return to my world?”

“I can’t answer that.”

“I knew it...”

“You didn’t answer me back then. Are you really going to leave, just like that?”

“I already answered you back then. I need to get back to my world as soon as I can.”

R can be frightfully annoying at times.

“So what if I leave?”

“Well, this world will come to an end without Rekka-san,” R informed me in an emotionless voice.

“...End?”

“It’s not that difficult to understand,” R continued as she drifted out of the floor. “A ‘story abandoned by its protagonist’ has no other conclusion except destruction. In fact, there are kingdoms that had perished because your ancestors abandoned them in the past, because descendents of the Namidare family really are the final hope for the people in these ‘stories’.”

R’s eyes appeared totally serious under her military cap.

“...But my old man never told me about that.”

“Because of his love for you, Rekka-san. If he had told you that abandoning a ‘story’ would spell its doom, you might have acted recklessly to try and save everyone. As you said yourself earlier, you’re just an ordinary human being.”

Well, the old man did make me promise not to abandon the “stories”.

Maybe he had wanted to tell me to do my best to rescue them. He did say it in a roundabout way...but maybe it was really his parental love which prevented him from requesting it outright.

So now that I know, what should I do?

I’m only armed with the laser gun and warp watch I was holding while on the spaceship, and Satsuki’s phone in my pocket. Even so, all these girls are asking me to save them in their “stories”.

Three girls, three “stories”... But there is only one me.

Will I be able to rescue them all?

PART 02

— —

“So, Rekka-san, how will you end this story?” R asked.

“Like it’s none of my business. You’re just trying to guilt-trip me.”

“Well, though I’d much rather you don’t resolve the ‘stories’ and get on good terms with the ‘heroines’, letting you do that also means that my mission will never be accomplished.”

“...Wait. Don’t tell me that aside from helping me to understand my old man’s true motives, you’re also speaking to help yourself succeed in your mission?”

“Of course.”

“Now you’ve done it~”

In a fit of anger, I grabbed R’s cheeks and squeezed them with all my might.

“Ow ow ow ow ow.”

Either way, I guess I had to make a decision. Now’s not the time for indecisiveness.

I jumped off the bed upon which I had been sitting, and stuck the laser gun in my belt for safekeeping.

“Where are you going?”

“For a walk.”

“So you’re not going back to your world?”

“Not right now. I need some time to think.”

"I see."

With R in tow, we strolled aimlessly through the palace grounds. Passing through the stone corridors of the place just made the whole experience seem like one straight out of an RPG.

"...I get the feeling that everyone's watching us."

"I know."

I guess it couldn't be helped, since I was still dressed in my school uniform, which must appear totally strange to people from this world.

But it was really hard to think with all these people staring at me.

"Maybe it'll be better if I find a room to get away from these people."

"No, walking puts pressure on the soles of your feet, which in turn stimulates the brain, so it's best to walk around when you're trying to think."

"Wow, you sure know lots, R."

"Humph. It's just that Rekka-san knows almost nothing."

Someone spare me from her arrogance and lecturing.

"Hmm? Do you smell something good?"

"Hm? Now that you mention it, yes."

R turned and swam through the air as if she were in water, and I followed in her wake.

Soon, we reached an open door leading to a room where the smell was wafting from.

"I think this is the kitchen."

"I was just wondering. Do you feel hunger, R?"

"No. But I do possess a sense of smell, and that's telling me that this is a delicious scent."

"I see. I'm actually starving here."

Aside from some bread I'd eaten for breakfast this morning, I'd not had the time to consume anything else today.

I walked through the door, intending to ask for a meal.

"Erm. Excuse me!"

"Yez? Wow! Could it be?! Are you our hero-zama?!"

A woman who appeared to be the in-charge bustled over excitedly in welcome.

"Wow, we'll all be saved with your arrival, and zis kingdom will finally be at peace again."

But I'm not a hero... Well, I guess it won't hurt to talk to someone here before I decide if I should return to my own world.

"This is actually my first time here, so I don't know much. Could you tell me more about this kingdom?"

"What? Didn't His Majesty or Harissa-chan tell you anything? Zat won't do, especially when hero-zama has to seek knowledge from someone like me. Alright, ask away, I'll try my best to answer."

"OK, let's start with the Demon King..."

Finally, I learned the story of the Demon King and his army.

The Demon King, who had been safely sealed away for hundreds of years, had awakened two years ago.

Summoned by their King, the Demon Army started appearing all over the kingdom. As they were immediately deported back to their world once the fighting was over, the kingdom's troops had no chance of

lauching any counter-attacks or planning for the next invasion, resulting in eminent defeat.

However, this also meant that defeating the Demon King could effectively stop his army. The only problem was that the shield surrounding the solitary island where the Demon King had built his fortress prevented anyone from getting near him.

“We’ve sent out countless Demon King Suppression Contingents, but none had managed to break through ze barrier. Ze summoned Demon Army made sure of zat.”

“If there’s such a strong barrier in place, what can I possibly do?”

“I’m sure you’ll be fine!”

“Why?”

“Zere’s a ‘Hero’s Sword’ sealed in ze basement of zis castle zat only you can wield,” the woman exclaimed excitedly. “Zey say ze ‘Hero’s Sword’ contains a magical power zat can cut through any spell. I’m sure ze barrier won’t even stand a chance against you.”

I see. So this was the reason why all the people in this kingdom are so reliant upon a hero to save them.

The woman heaved a heavy sigh of relief.

“I’m so glad~ Our kingdom will be saved, Harissa-chan too.”

“?”

Did she just say Harissa-chan “too”?

Just as I was about to ask more, a man’s voice sounded outside the kitchen door, calling for help to serve the dishes.

“Oops, zat’s my cue,” the woman said reluctantly as she bowed. “I’m sorry, but I need to go. Please ask Harissa-chan if you need to know more, she’s usually in ze castle’s resource room.”

“Resource room?”

“In ze western tower.”

“I see. I’ll head over there soon.”

It would be hard seeing her after I’d just shouted at her just a while ago, but I needed to speak to her again in order to resolve this issue. Besides, what the woman mentioned about saving Harissa had caught my attention too.

“Thank you. Please don’t let me delay you any further from your work...”

“Oh, please wait a moment,” the woman called out just as I was turning to leave. “I’d like to tell you something about Harissa-chan.”

“?”

“We came from ze same village, so I know her well. She may be ze army’s magician, but she is actually quite a timid girl. It’s only because of such desperate times zat she was enlisted to help out in ze war efforts against her will.”

This was my first time hearing that Harissa was part of the army. It didn’t suit her at all.

“Hero-zama, please be as kind to her as you can.”

With that, the woman dashed out of the kitchen.

PART 03

— —

“Shall we go find Harissa?”

Following the woman's directions, R and I headed to the western tower and ascended to the top floor.

pant pant

"Just how high up is this place?"

"256 steps."

"Thanks, but no thanks."

"I'm floating so it's OK for me."

I reached out to swat R into the floor, but she floated away easily.

Exchanging more insults, we finally reached the resource room.

"Can you hear something from inside?"

"Sounds like crying."

"Can it be Harissa...?"

"Probably."

With much reluctance, I silently pushed the door open.

The room was lined with shelves filled with books and scrolls, and tall stacks of paper piled upon the floor. If an earthquake were to happen, anyone here would be buried in a second. It was hard trying to get a full view of the place with all the stacks of books around, and I didn't manage to see Harissa right away.

Following the sound of crying, I finally found a robed figure sitting in a corner of the room, hugging her knees as she cried.

"Harissa."

"Huh?! ...H-hero-sama! J-J-Jearim Neckr-"

"Wait! Don't run away."

I grabbed Harissa's hand, afraid that she would turn invisible and escape again.

Harissa tried desperately to escape from my grasp.

"D-don't! Hero-zama shouldn't touch me, I'll get filth on you."

For a moment, Harissa's accent sounded just like the woman from the kitchen. That's right, she had said that they came from the same village. So this was how she normally sounded like.

"That's not gonna happen, so calm down."

"No! My hand will sweat when in contact with hero-zama's!"

Now that she mentioned it, her palm was indeed slightly moist, but that wasn't important now.

No matter what she said or how she struggled, I kept my grip firm, and her face slowly reddened.

"P-p-p-pushu~~!"

Finally, like a machine gone into overheating, Harissa slumped weakly to the floor.

"Rekka-san, I do wish you could be more assertive like that when it comes to other situations."

Ignoring R's random comment, I focused my attention on Harissa.

"Alright..."

I quickly updated Harissa on what the woman from the kitchen had told me.

"...So what did she mean when she said that you would be 'saved' too?"

"...I've actually been put on death row."

I gulped.

“W-why?”

“...I’m supposed to be an expert on magical summoning, but...”

Slowly, Harissa revealed her story.

“My task is to use magic to summon spirits from the spiritual world. But spirits can be really moody creatures, so it’s up to the summoner to please them. If we can’t do that, the spirit may get angry and go on a rampage, messing up our world very badly before they would leave.”

“That’s not very nice...”

“I know. But I failed disastrously.”

“When?”

“...When I joined the 7th Demon King Suppression Contingent.”

“Gasp!”

Talk about bad timing.

“I was supposed to summon a spirit to intercept the Demon King’s army... But I couldn’t control it well...”

Harissa started to sob as she continued her story.

“The spirit turned on us and destroyed our headquarters... In the end, the 7th Demon King Suppression Contingent had to retreat... And I was blamed for the destruction of the headquarters and sentenced to death...! ...But because I’m the only summoner left in the kingdom... I was given a chance to be granted pardon if I could summon a hero through the royal legend’s ritual.”

“I see.”

So that was why she looked so stricken when I insisted I weren’t a hero.

“.....But it’s alright,” Harissa said as she gave a defeated smile.

Her expression...spoke of utter dejection. It was the first time I'd ever seen anyone look like that.

The left side of my chest clenched up in pain.

Having led an ordinary life, I could not possibly imagine how it must feel to embrace the amount of despair that Harissa's smile hinted at... How can it be right that someone younger than me has to face such a thing? Is this how everyone in this kingdom really feels, facing defeat at the hands of a Demon King? Is that the reason why nobody had stepped up to help Harissa? Because the kingdom is doomed...?

"I'm stupid, a crybaby, unable to help with farming back at the village... I was so happy when I learned that I passed the military selection test that selected me as a potential summoner, but it seems like I'm not up to it in the end."

Harissa buried her face in her robe-clad knees.

So there is really no one in this kingdom who could dispel the dark and gloomy look on her face?

"I'm just a pest who brings misfortune to everyone. Unhappiness really suits me best... Oh, if only I had been executed back then..."

A smile came to Harissa's face. It was an enlightened smile, her belief that she was doomed already sealed.

...No, that can't be.

Nobody should accept death so easily. Harissa must have reached out to me because she wants to live. How strongly she must have reached, trying to connect with a "hero" from another world... And I had pushed her away.

No matter how much Harissa seems prepared for death, she isn't an immortal.

She's just an ordinary girl. A girl who doesn't want to die, who wishes to be saved.

Therefore,

"No."

Having pushed her away once, I gripped her hand tight this time.

Harissa raised her head, her face dripping with tears.

"Don't say that unhappiness suits you."

"Hero...-sama?"

"It's like saying that it's ordinary to be unhappy... How can that ever be true?"

I like being ordinary. I love it. I mean, that's what makes me happy.

But Harissa was now insisting the opposite.

That being unhappy is ordinary.

That's just something... I can never tolerate.

"...Arghh~~ Dammit! Guess I have no choice!"

Harissa stared as I clutched at my head.

"Sorry, Satsuki. I'll head back as soon as I can, so please wait for me."

I sent a silent apology to Satsuki back on Earth.

I know I don't have time to make detours... But I have no choice.

Without me, this "story" and this poor girl will be doomed.

So... it's ordinary for me to want to save them.

"I'll defeat the Demon King."

PART 04

— —

According to Harissa, the hero should first proceed to retrieve the “Hero’s Sword” before heading to the local tavern to gather some comrades. Unfortunately, I had no time for that.

“B-b-b-but! You’re going to defeat the Demon King, right?”

“Yes, then I’ll have to face off against a wizard and an alien king.”

I had no time to go through a tutorial like those offered in RPGs.

“It’s 2.30 p.m. now.”

I’d spent about 1.5 hours in this world already. Iris had mentioned that her spaceship would take 3 hours to complete its warp, so hopefully I would be back in her world by that time.

Which meant my biggest problem now was distance.

“Erm, hero-sama. You’ve been staring at that thing for awhile now. May I ask what it is?”

“This? It’s a watch, and tells you what time it is right now.”

“Ooh— That’s really convenient to have. So, is that one a watch too?” Harissa asked as she pointed to the warp watch strapped to my other wrist.

“No. This is called a warp watch.”

“Warp watch? What is that?”

“It can teleport me through space when I key in some calculated coordinates.”

Which meant I couldn't use it, since I didn't know how to calculate coordinates. If only I knew how, it would be a breeze to warp past the barrier and enter the Demon King's fortress.

As I sighed in defeat, Harissa hesitantly raised a hand.

"I know how to calculate coordinates."

"Really!?"

"Y-yes. It's essential to calculate coordinates when trying to summon spirits to a specific location."

"Alright! Could you key in the coordinates now? You'll need to base them with our position as the start point and the Demon King's fortress as the destination."

With this, I passed the warp watch to Harissa.

"Erm, I think there's a map of our kingdom somewhere in this room. I'll go get it."

With quick steps, Harissa dashed towards the stacks of books scattered around the resource room.

"Now that we've solved the movement problem, what about weapons?"

The "Hero's Sword" came to mind.

"She said the sword could cut through spells, but can I use it against the Demon King...?"

"More importantly, Rekka-san, have you ever learnt how to wield a sword?"

"...Oh."

That's right. There's no point having a weapon if I don't know how to use it. Even if I could retrieve the "Hero's Sword", being a commoner and all, I probably couldn't wield it.

Usually, a hero would gather experience by fighting slime creatures first, gaining skill with the sword along his journey before challenging a boss like the Demon King. Sadly, I wouldn't have time for that.

"This is bad..."

Soon, Harissa returned, dashing back to my side.

"Hero-sama~ I've keyed in the coordinates~"

"Really? That's fast."

"I did my best~. This should teleport us to the center of the isla- kyaa!"

As she was running, Harissa stepped onto some papers on the floor and slipped.

I reached out and grabbed her.

"Are you alright?"

"I-I-I-I'm alright!"

Harissa pushed herself away from me in panic.

Her face appeared red... Had she hit her nose against my chest when I caught her?

"How was it, Rekka-san?"

R's face was suddenly up against mine. What did she mean by 'how was it'? I stared at her in confusion.

"Her chest. Bust. Breasts. You groped them as you caught her, right?"

"Of course not!"

Harissa flinched at my sudden outburst.

"H-hero-sama!?"

"Oh, sorry. It's nothing."

Shit. R really loves getting me riled up because nobody else could see or hear her.

Cursing R in my mind, I bent to pick up the warp watch Harissa had dropped.

At that moment... the warp watch's display lit up with a beep.

[Checking coordinates. Warp commencing in 10, 9, 8, 7...]

"H-hey, wait a minute!"

Why was it working already? Did the drop switch it on?

Iris hadn't taught me how to cancel the process, nor did she mention this countdown. There was no time to spare.

"There's no other choice! I gotta go!"

If I left it alone, the warp watch would teleport to the Demon King's fortress by itself. If that happens, I probably wouldn't be able to leave this world anytime soon.

That decided, I secured the warp watch around my wrist once again.

Just then, Harissa grabbed my hand.

"I-I'm going too!"

"Idiot! Let go...!"

Just as I was shaking her off, the countdown reached [0].

[Commencing warp.]

PART 05

— —

The next moment, I found myself in a freezing place.

“Uh.... Urrgh?”

My head was spinning. Was this an aftereffect of the warp?

I glanced at my surroundings. The floor under my fingers felt like the same stone used in the construction of the royal palace, and the place was very dim. Some flaming torchlights along the walls lit up the room, but its glow was not strong enough to dispel the shadows from the far wall. Without windows, sunlight could not enter the room, and the air in here felt frozen... This sparse place definitely needed an interior designer.

“Ouch. What is this place?”

I heard Harissa ask from beside me, as well as the rustling of her robe. Damn, so she'd come along as well.

“Harissa! Why did you come?”

“B-b-b-but, I can't just let hero-sama come here on your own!”

“Why not? Isn't this the reason why you summoned me?”

“That's true... But when hero-sama said that our business has nothing to do with you, I've been thinking...”

As my eyes slowly adjusted to the dim, I saw Harissa nodding as she continued.

“What hero-sama said was right. You come from another world, and our world's business has nothing to do with you. However, we are unable to solve the problem on our own, which is why we need your help. I guess His Majesty, the Army, everyone, even myself, are selfish in that manner.”

Harissa gripped her staff tighter against her body.

“But Rekka-sama said that he would fight for us. Even though it’s not your problem, you’re doing it for our world. And it makes me guilty since I’ve only been thinking of my own fate... So please, let me fight with you.”

Her strong determination reached out to me acutely.

“OK, but get this right.”

Before I agreed, I needed her to understand something.

“The reason why I’m going to defeat the Demon King is for you, Harissa.”

“M-m-me?!”

“Of course.”

It’s because you looked so pitiful, but saying that out loud would have been too rude.

“For... me...”

“What’s wrong? Harissa? Your face is red.”

Despite the dark, the blush on her face was plain to see.

“I-it’s nothing! N-nothing’s the matter!”

“Oh, OK then.”

Her voice still sounded strange to my ears... But it doesn’t really matter.

“So I’m not going to put you in harm’s way at any cost. I will battle the Demon King alone.”

“B-b-but!”

“No buts. Here’s the warp watch, now go back to the palace-”

"I refuse! I've made up my mind to fight with hero-zama, and I will!"

This won't do. And it seemed that Harissa's accent would show itself whenever she was flustered.

Just as I was puzzling over how to change her mind, a third voice spoke up.

"Oi..."

It was a low bellow that made the room tremble, and seemed to be coming from the darkness at the other end of the room.

"What are you doing, making noise in my domain...?"

As my eyes had already adjusted to the dark, I could clearly see the owner of the voice.

The first thing I made out was a humongous bed, large enough to sleep up to fifty men. Hanging off the edge was a fat, round tail and sail-like wings, joined to a huge frame. With four stout limbs, sharp claws, armored scales, teeth, red eyes glowing in the dark, and a cockscomb on its head, the creature resembled a ferocious, carnivorous lizard. Having played many games, I knew exactly what it was.

"A d-dragon!?"

"The D-D-Demon King!?"

Harissa and I screamed at the same time.



The green-scaled dragon -or Demon King- narrowed his eyes, probably annoyed at the noise we were making.

"Just what are you...? You look very well for a couple of decomposing corpses."

I looked over at Harissa, puzzled.

"S-s-s-some demons look like decomposing c-c-c-corpses," she explained.

Thanks for the matter-of-fact answer, Harissa. But more importantly, how did we end up in this situation?

I glanced at R this time, silently praying for an explanation. How many times had I done that today?

"The coordinates Harissa-san entered seems to center on the middle of this island, which is where the Demon King's fortress stands. I'm guessing the warp just happened to send you right into his bedroom?"

Argh! This was just like finding a needle in a haystack, the ultimate bad luck.

"Good job. You've hit the jackpot. Congrats, Rekka-san."

"You're so annoying!"

But yelling at the relaxed R would not help the situation.

First, I pushed Harissa behind me, and faced the Demon King straight. Chances of me winning? None!

The Demon King scratched at his chin with a finger as thick as my waist, as he tilted his head in consideration.

"I heard that girl call you 'hero-sama', but my barrier is still intact..."

"O-of course. How can someone like me be a hero?!"

I nodded vigorously, hoping the Demon King would be convinced.

“But if you are not the hero, then who are you?”

“I d-don’t know?”

“I don’t like stupid answers.”

“W-we’re lost!”

“I said, I don’t like stupid answers.”

The room shook as the Demon King raised his voice, making the floor creak. His presence was just overwhelming. I can never defeat something like him.

My mind was panicking, and I couldn’t come up with another answer, but I needed to do something to get us out of here...! If not, it’ll be game over before we’ve even begun.

No. I need to calm down and think of a solution...!

I started riffling through my pockets, looking for something that would help.

Just then, my fingers brushed against an object stuck in my belt.

“A-alright. I’ll be truthful with you.”

Mustering up my courage, I spoke to the Demon King.

“Oh, what is it now?”

I pulled out the laser gun from my belt and fired it at the Demon King.

“Take this!”

“W-what!? GWAAAARRGGHHHH!”

PART 06

— —

Maybe it was because the Demon King was caught off-guard, because despite my lousy aim and not-very-surprise attack, I managed to hit him dead-center.

“W-w-what’s this!?”

The beam was so thick! Iris had called it a laser gun, but it worked more like a laser cannon!

The destructive-looking beam instantly engulfed the top half of the Demon King like a flash flood.

Then...the dazzling light died out, leaving a tunnel-like hole in the wall leading to the outside and a Demon King, half-charred.

...W-well, it was really just a reflex action on my part, but if that had defeated the Demon King, then that’s for the best too.

I was still a little dazed, but Harissa seemed extremely excited as she looked at me with sparkling eyes.

“T-t-t-that was amazing! I thought light magic had ceased to exist in our world since hundreds of years ago! Rekka-sama is really the legendary hero!”

“Oh, erm, well...”

It’s not really magic... but I guess it didn’t matter to Harissa.

More importantly, now that the Demon King was defeated, I needed to get back as soon as possible. There’s still so much I need to...

“Kukkukku... Now you’ve done it.”

Just then, a thunderous bellow echoed throughout the room.

“D-Demon King!?”

“Light magic, the thing humans created in order to defeat me. I’m surprised there’s still someone who knows how to use it.”

It was really the Demon King’s voice, which meant I hadn’t heard wrong the first time. It was still alive.

“But I’m not that weak to be defeated just like that.”

The Demon King’s lower half started to pulse as the charred top disintegrated. From the join, a brand new top half soon sprouted. Instead of two eyes, it had grown two more, so four evil gazes were now narrowed at me. Its arms had also split at the elbow, creating more hands with huge claws. Its scales glowed golden, and the scales on its lower half quickly fell off to be replaced with golden ones as well.

“Oi, Harissa... What’s happening?”

“I-I-I-I don’t know. The books never talked about something like t-t-this.”

Harissa had sunk to the floor in fear.

“Did you really think I had been doing nothing in those hundreds of years I was sealed away?”

The golden dragon laughed lowly, showing off its sharp teeth.

“Your attack won’t work with this evolved form.”

“What!? Really?”

I knew that easy fluke victory was too good to be true.

Seeing our flustered faces, the Demon King grinned sadistically.

“There were two things that helped seal me away during that first battle long ago. The first was light magic. The second, that ‘Hero’s Sword’ that muted all my magic. But I’d since done rigorous research into the

‘Hero’s Sword’, and have successfully gained enough power to stand up against it.”

“B-but that’s impossible!”

Harissa’s voice was full of despair.

“W-wait... What does that mean!?” I shouted, not understanding.

The Demon King let out a cruel smirk, baring its teeth.

“It means that your light magic is useless against my evolved form.”

“Uuuuh... But that’s...”

Harissa’s voice trembled, as if choking back tears.

Magic is useless against the Demon King... It must be a horrible blow to Harissa as a mage, no, to all the people in this kingdom, to learn that their only solution to defeat the Demon King was fruitless.

“Is that so?”

I was the only one who refused to give up.

“Yes, sink into despair, worthless humans. Now bow down before me, the inescapable embodiment of destruc-”

“Hey!”

I fired the laser gun again, preventing the Demon King from finishing his boastful speech.

“GYAAAAAAHHH!”

Letting out the same roar of pain, the Demon King was once again reduced to ash. The room descended into silence.

“...I knew it.”

I nodded wisely, satisfied that my reasoning had proved right.

“Ehhhhhhhhhh!?”

Harissa screamed, a few seconds too late, a shocked expression on her face as if she couldn't believe I'd just won.

“W-w-w-w-what is zis? W-W-Why did hero-zama's light magic work against ze Demon King?”

“C-calm down, let me explai-”

Just as I was about to speak, the Demon King revived itself again.

This time, its lower half had morphed to resemble a centaur, so it now had four arms and four legs. It had also grown much larger than before, its head mere inches from the room's ceiling.

“You brat! What did you do to me!? I'm immune to your magi-”

“It's simple. I'm not using magic, but the power of science.”

Or rather, the power of science of aliens.

“S-science?”

“Now just die!”

“GWAAAARRRRRRGGGHHHHHH!”

I had no time to answer the Demon King's questions; he spoke too much, as it was.

The Demon King revived again and again, and I shot it down each time.

“Stop interrup-GYAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH!”

“Are you really the her-UGYAAAARRGHHH!”

“How co-BUGYYYAAAAAAAAAAAAHHH!”

How irritating.

“Just how many more evolved forms do you have?”

“Don’t get too cocky, brat. My powers increase every time I evolve. I still have two more evolutions you haven’t yet seen.”

“So I just need to shoot you twice more.”

“Wai- GUWAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!”

And just like that, I charred the Demon King into defeat. It had said that its power would increase, but in the end, he turned into a huge barbecued dragon instead of soot, accompanied by a slightly delicious smell.

“.....”

For a moment, we were left speechless.

To the people living in this kingdom, the romantic legend of the hero defeating the Demon King would probably be destroyed by how things actually turned out. But does it matter, since the Demon King was defeated afterall?

And through this experience, I’d also learned something important.

If this had been the only “story” I was dragged into today, I would probably have acted more heroic by going to retrieve the “Hero’s Sword” before embarking on my journey to battle the Demon King. I’d surely have travelled to the tavern to seek out some comrades, we would battle tiny monsters to level up our sword skills and magic, then head over to the Demon King’s fortress.

However, we would probably have a tough time battling the Demon King’s second evolved form, since magical attacks wouldn’t work. That said, I’d been dragged into three “stories” simultaneously, which meant that the common laws in that “story”’s world -or its rules, if that’s what they’re called- might not apply to me.

This knowledge might come in handy when I resolve Satsuki and Iris' "stories". I commanded my brain to commit this information into memory.

"...So, guess there's nothing more to be done here. Let's head back to the palace."

"O-oh..."

To see the powerful Demon King utterly defeated by the unknown power of science, Harissa could only nod with a dumbfounded look on her face.

PART 07

— —

Using the warp watch, we returned to the palace's resource room.

"Now, please return me to the world I came from."

"Are you going already!?"

"Yes."

I'd said it numerous times, I really didn't have time.

In order to return to where I came from, I just needed Abraham's summoner -Harissa- to teleport me back. It should be easy.

"Come on, I'm begging you."

"...So you're really going to leave?"

Yes, wasn't that what I've been saying all along?

Just why was Harissa hesitating to send me back? The hero she'd summoned (I guess it really was me) had defeated the Demon King. She just needed to report to the King and get herself pardoned. I was sure my presence wasn't required there.

"Stareeeee..."

With that stupid sound effect, R stared at me as well, waiting for an answer.

I just don't get it.

Guess I just have to convince Harissa.

"Why don't you want me to leave?"

"That's because... Well... I haven't reported to His Majesty yet... He will surely wish to celebrate the defeat of the Demon King. S-so, hero-sama will need to attend the festivities..."

"No. It was pure luck that I managed to defeat the Demon King, so I don't need any celebration. Besides, I really need to return to my former world."

"...Is there someone waiting for hero-sama there?"

"Huh? Well, yeah."

I'm guessing Satsuki and Iris were still waiting for my rescue.

"I see..."

Huh? Why did Harissa suddenly look so sad?

"Jesus..."

R exclaimed as she spun herself round and round in midair. She sounded exactly like my old man when he couldn't get the cap off of his beer bottle.

"I understand. I'll send you back to your former world."

"Yes, please."

"But before you go...please take this with you."

Harissa passed a bracelet neatly woven out of red thread to me.

"A red bracelet?"

"It's a magical item known as a 'Red String'. Now..."

Harissa pulled out a single thread from the Red String and tied it around her little finger.

"The Red String serves to weave people's destinies together. As long as hero-sama is wearing it, you just have to wish really hard and you will be transported to Abraham anytime."

"Ooh."



So it was a one-way ticket to travel between worlds.

“Why are you giving it to me?”

“I know I wasn’t of any help when hero-sama was battling the Demon King, but should you meet with any difficulty when you return to your former world, I hope that I’ll be able to help as much as I can.”

“You’ve helped me out lots, Harissa, so don’t worry about that,” I said as I smiled sheepishly at her.

“What do you mean!?” Harissa shouted angrily.

It was the first time I’d seen her angry.

“Hero-sama has no idea how grateful I am to you! If you hadn’t come, I would have been sentenced to death. You battled the Demon King in my place, because I was too pathetic. This gratitude will never be repaid no matter how much I do.”

Shocked at Harissa’s threatening look, I could only nod in agreement.

Harissa rubbed at her eyes. Her outburst must have reduced her to tears.

“Please use the Red String. I’ll definitely make myself useful.”

“...Alright. Thank you.”

I couldn’t bear to return the Red String after what she’d said, anyway, so I just took the item and thanked her.

Harissa drew a geometrical magic square on the floor of the resource room. I couldn’t decipher any of the characters written inside the square, but I could see that it was just wide enough for one person to stand within.

“This one looks alot smaller than the previous square.”

“Summoning is a difficult process, but teleportation is relatively simple.”

“Hmm... So I guess the most important part of the procedure is the summoning itself, right?”

As we chatted, I finally decided to ask Harissa about something which had been on my mind all this while.

“Harissa, you’re actually a very talented mage, aren’t you?”

“Huh? T-t-that’s not true. I’m a failed summoner...”

“But it must have been a really tough spell, that secret royal ritual that summoned me to this world?”

“Well, I guess.”

“See? Harissa definitely has the talent to summon spirits and other beings. And to control the summoned spirits, you just need to be driven and focused, right? I don’t really know... But Harissa, I think you just need a little self-confidence.”

“Self-confidence?”

“Yes. I mean, you’re the only mage in the hero’s party, and we defeated the Demon King. So you just need to be more confident from now on, and stop beating yourself down.”

Whoa, just when did I become such a lecturing old man?

Even so, I knew in my heart that what I said was the right thing.

The real reason why I was determined to defeat the Demon King was because she really wished for me to do so. Before she’d given up and resigned herself to unhappiness, she had believed that she could be happy... Without that, one can never lead an ordinary life.

I wished for Harissa to hang on tight to happiness from now on... Was I asking for too much? Oh well, I’d probably never see her again, so I guess it was alright to leave her with such cheesy sayings.

The magic square filled with light...and just before I was teleported away, I thought I heard Harissa whisper,

“...If I can, I really hope to see you again, my hero-sama.”

Chapter 3: I’m just an Earthling, can I stop an intergalactic war?

PART 01

— —

The light vanished, and Iris’ face was right before mine.

“Mn...uwaahh!”

“Kyaah!”

Caught off guard with our faces so close, we both screamed as we jumped backward.

Ah, that was close. If we had been any closer, our faces, or at least some part of which I wouldn’t name, would have collided.

Anyway, since Iris was here, it meant that I’d been teleported back successfully.

I let out a relieved sigh...then a grunt as Iris pounced on me and pushed me to the ground.

“Rekka, just where did you go? I was so worried!”

I didn’t think she’d believe me if I said I’d been to another world.

“Sorry, stuff happened.”

“Stuff?! And I remember cleaning you up, so why are you all dirty again!? The warp is going to end soon, we need to get you ready to meet Papa!”

“The warp’s ending?”

I checked my watch.

It was just before 4 p.m. I had been out of Earth for almost three hours.

“Seems like you got back just in time, Rekka-san,” R commented as she adjusted her military cap.

Her face was expressionless as always, but I detected a sense of moodiness about her. Now that I noticed it, wasn’t she already moody just before we were teleported back, or was it just me...?

Either way, she was right. I had returned just in time. Now I just needed to explain the situation to Iris and hope that she would warp me back to Earth.

But before I even managed to open my mouth, Iris grabbed my hand.

“Come on, hurry up. You can change in my room.”

“Huh?! Hey, wait!”

Iris possessed a strength that belied her slim arms as she dragged me along, and I had no choice but to follow behind.

“First, you need a bath. Come, get in.”

“Hey, wait. I need to tell you something really import- Hey!”

Before I could mention that I needed to go save Satsuki, I was pushed into a bathroom.

And what a strange bathroom it was. There was no sign of the usual bathtub or shower.

“Alright, time to bathe!”

“Huh? But I’m still dressed...”

I heard the girl operate something from outside the bathing area, before the ceiling above me opened up to release a large amount of white gas.

“Oi, hey! Gyaa!”

Suddenly, my body was gripped by a strong centrifugal force which started swirling me and the gas around. After more than ten seconds of continuous whirling that left me unable to distinguish up from down and left from right... I was finally released.

“Alright, you’re done. Now you’re clean,” Iris exclaimed as she stepped into the bathing area.

I just felt like puking.

“...Now I know how clothes feel when they go into the washing machine.”

I guessed the white gas acted as some sort of cleaning agent which could clean both the body and the clothes at the same time. I had to admit it was efficient, despite its strange methods(?).

“Let’s choose your clothes next. Since you’re my lover, I’ll dress you up really nicely!”

“Hey, just wai-”

I was dragged down another corridor, and we arrived at a room which looked like a girl’s bedroom.

A round bed with pink sheets. A large chest with a make-up dresser. Soft toys of seemingly un-Earth-like animals piled like a mountain against one wall. I wonder if that octopus-giraffe hybrid really existed somewhere in this universe... I definitely wouldn’t want to meet it. There were lots of other knick-knacks as well, but the place was as large as my living room back home, so the room still appeared quite spacious.

“Alright, I wonder what looks good on Rekka!”

Iris hummed as she pulled clothes out of her chest of drawers. A dress, another dress, yet another dress... Just what was she planning to make me wear?

“H-hey, Iris...”

“Hmm? What?”

Iris stopped riffling through her drawers and turned towards me.

Argh!... It would be tough to say it when she was looking at me like that, but I had no choice. Satsuki was in danger right now, while Iris’ problem wasn’t as serious. Comparatively speaking, it wasn’t hard to understand why I would put Satsuki first.

Determined, I finally spoke.

“When this warp ends... Sorry, but can you send me back to Earth, please?”

“Huh!? But why!?”

As expected, Iris was not happy with my request.

“Actually...”

I told Iris about how my childhood friend, Satsuki, was currently being targeted by a wizard named Messiah. I left out the parts about me mistaking Iris for Satsuki back at the abandoned factory, as well as the “Namidare Lineage”, as I felt it would just make things even more confusing.

I gave a thorough explanation, making sure to emphasize on Satsuki’s dire situation, and I was sure I’d done a good job of that.

Iris would surely be convinced and bring me back to Earth, but,

“No.”

Her reply was immediate and final.

PART 02

— —

“B-but why!?” I argued.

But the alien girl had turned away from me.

“That Satsuki woman is more important to Rekka than me, right? So, no.”

“No, this isn’t about who is more important. I just need to go rescue her-”

“I need Rekka to rescue me too. Why don’t you want to meet my Papa!?”

Erm, just what was happening here? Did Iris think that I just wanted to rescue Satsuki but not her?

“I’ll act as your lover later, but Satsuki is in immediate danger now, so just let me go rescue her first...”

“See? That Earthling woman is more important than me!”

Why was this even happening!?

Iris slapped my hand away when I tried to reach out to her, and dove headfirst onto the bed.

“I hate Rekka!” she screamed from beneath the blanket, as I paced around the room, unsure of how to proceed.

Why was this happening? Didn't I tell her that Satsuki was being targeted by Messiah? I could act as her lover anytime, so it was common sense that I would place Satsuki first.

As I clutched at my head, R swam backwards through the air, aiming a cold glance my way.

"Rekka-san, you're really such a dense guy who knows nothing about a lady's heart."

I was speechless...

Iris had curled up under the blanket, and didn't seem to be ready to come out anytime soon.

[Exiting warp in a short while. Beware of turbulence]

I glanced up as the sound of the announcement drifted down from the ceiling.

Damn. I wanted to return to Earth as soon as this warp ended, but it would be tough when Iris wasn't ready to cooperate. I needed to cheer her up somehow.

"Erm... Sorry. Please don't be angry, come on out."

Whomp!

Iris' tail, which was sticking out from beneath the sheets, gave an angry thump against the mattress.

Damn. Did I say that wrong?

[Exiting warp]

The announcement signaled the end of the warp.

Since Iris' private bedroom had no windows, I didn't see the spaceship leave the warp zone. Instead, I felt a sudden drop of my stomach, and I guess that was the sign that we had exited the warp.

“H-hey, I’m begging you. I want to return to Earth soon,” I cajoled as I tugged at the blanket over Iris.

“No! Never!” Iris shouted as she tugged the blanket back over herself.

For a moment, I felt like a mother trying to get her sleepy child out of bed.

Since Iris was obviously stronger, I soon tired of trying to tug the blanket off.

Now was not the time to act like children. I needed to go rescue Satsuki as soon as possible.

I stood up once again, placing my hands on Iris’ body and shaking her.

“Oi! Seriously! I’m really begging you! I’ll get down on my knees and prostrate before you if that’s what you want.”

“What’s prostrate?”

“A man’s last weapon!”

Or that was what my mum told me. In fact, she, rather than my old man, was the one who taught me how to be a gentleman.

“.....”

Iris poked her face out from beneath the sheets and looked up at me, expression guarded. Judging by her demeanour, she was still not ready to accede to my request.

“...I promise you!”

Now wasn’t the time to hold on to pride. I utilized my last weapon, heroically sinking to my knees and colliding my head with the floor. I heard Iris flinch, probably shocked by this strange display.

"Once I rescue Satsuki, I promise to rescue Iris! Please just let me go to Satsuki. She might be in Messiah's clutches right now. So please! I beg you!"

I fell silent. Now, I just needed Iris to understand my feelings.

Iris remained quiet for awhile. I could feel her staring at the back of my head.

I persisted, unmoving.

In the end... I won out.

Iris sat up, still wrapped up in her blanket as she stared at me.

"...Rekka, do you like Satsuki?"

"Huh? No, she's just a childhood friend."

Stunned by the sudden question, I answered as honestly as I could.

Sigh...

For some reason, R was sighing above my head.

Then...

"...I get it. You can return to Earth."

"Really!?"

I jumped up and looked at Iris.

She still looked unhappy, but her expression had softened.

"Why would I lie to you... But!"

Iris leaned off the edge of the bed towards me until our noses were almost touching.

"Satsuki is really your childhood friend, right? That's not a lie, is it?"

“Y-yes!”

I didn’t understand why that was so important to Iris, but since it was the truth, I nodded eagerly to appease her.

With a defeated sigh, Iris finally consented to bring me back to Earth.

Just then, a sudden impact knocked into the side of the spaceship, making the floor shake.

“Kyaa!”

“Uwaah!”

Caught off-guard, Iris lost her balance and tumbled off the edge of the bed, toppling on top of me.

“Ouch...”

In my attempt to keep her from falling, I’d struck my head against the floor, and my vision grew blurry.

“Why is the spaceship rocking like this?”

It felt like the vessel was being buffeted by waves in the sea.

I tried to push Iris off of me...but my palms connected with something soft with a squish.



Oh... A sense of dread swept over me. Iris' expression was also frozen in shock. I didn't want to look away from her face, didn't want to look down. But Iris' gaze slowly panned down to her chest, and my own gaze naturally followed to look straight upon reality. Oh, please somehow let this wonderful feeling against my palms be an illusion.

"Kyaah! Rekka touched my boobs!"

And my hopes were dashed by Iris' scream.

"No no no wait! It was an accident! A real accident!"

Iris jumped away from me, face red as she wrapped the blanket protectively around her body.

Hey, wasn't she the one who was always clinging on to me? I'd never touched her then. What a selfish girl... But there's no point in thinking that! I needed to assure her that I wasn't a pervert! No, I needed to find out why the spaceship was rocking like this.

"Iri-oof!"

Just as I opened my mouth, a soft toy that looked like a rabbit-penguin hybrid was thrown into my face.

"No! Don't come any closer!"

"OK! I won't, so stop throwing things at me!"

No matter how soft the toy was, it hurt when a strong alien was the one who threw it!

After calming Iris down, we headed to the spaceship's control room.

And what I saw there was...

"S-so many UFOs!?"

Numerous spaceships hovered outside our window as far as I could see, totally surrounding us. Several of them had linked up to Iris' spaceship, trapping it from moving.

"Iris. Don't tell me these are from the planet Satamonia..."

"...No. These belong to the police fleet from Phenerita."

"Huh?"

Wasn't Phenerita Iris' home planet? Why were we being captured?

[I've finally got you, Iris.]

A man's low voice suddenly sounded from the control room speakers. Iris' eyes widened.

"Papa!"

"Papa!?"

Hey hey, wasn't it a little exaggerated to capture your own daughter like this?

"Papa, why are you doing this? Why are you capturing me like I'm some convict?"

[...Because you know nothing. Maybe it's because I kept you sheltered for too long...]

His weirdly emotionless tone felt wrong.

Was this how a father speaks to his daughter?

"Hey, you."

[Hmm...? Is there someone with you, Iris...? Not that it matters. The questions can come later. First, let the fleet escort you to Phenerita. Then I'll need you to make an appearance at 'Owaria'.]

With that, the connection was cut.

We couldn't understand what was going on, but with our spaceship captured, there was no way to escape. We had no choice but to be led into Phenerita.

PART 03

— —

From space, Phenerita appeared as a green planet. As we touched down onto the ground, large fields stretched as far as the eye could see. If Earth was classified as a world of water, then Phenerita was definitely a world of grass.

As Iris' spaceship was anchored tightly to the others in the fleet, we could only be carried along wherever they went. And that wherever turned out to be a tall tower hidden in the midst of clouds. There was an opening, like a mouth, on the side of the tower, and the spaceships filed in one by one.

It seemed like this was the headquarters of Phenerita's high council, "Owaria".

Iris and I were made to alight from the spaceship, and my laser gun and warp watch were confiscated. I'd actually thought about escaping with the warp watch, but was told by Iris that "Owaria" was installed with devices that prevented warps from forming properly. With such measures in place, attempting to enter a warp here was just too dangerous...

We stepped onto a pedestal-like elevator. As it was ascending, I peered over the edge, wondering if anyone had fallen off before, but was assured by Iris that there was an invisible force field keeping us in and safe.

"....."

Escorted by the police guards surrounding us, Iris remained mostly silent. Her lips were pressed tightly together as she kept her eyes to the floor.

Well, I guess anyone would be in a bad mood, after being treated this way by their own father.

And just what was he, the council president of “Owaria”, thinking?

Like unshackled prisoners, we were soon brought to the highest floor of the tower... It was a room decorated with a round table where members of the high council sat. The room appeared unnaturally bright, and I soon realized that one of the walls was made of glass, offering a view of a sea of clouds outside.

Seated at the round table and dressed in clothes with high collars were a bunch of middle-aged and elderly men. Their expressions were stoic, and I guessed it was because they were members of the high council.

Hey hey, couldn't it get any more unwelcoming than this?

Then, the man seated on the opposite end of the table from where Iris and I stood -a muscular man with well-kept short silver hair and a deep frown on his face-, rested his chin upon his clasped hands and glared sharply at Iris.

“Who is that?”

I silently mouthed to Iris.

“That's...my Papa. ‘Owaria’s council president.”

“Why is he so angry?”

“I don't know. I guess it's because I ran away from home... But I've never seen him so mad before.”

Hmm...

I cast a sideways glance at R, hoping for an explanation, but she just shrugged in response.

"I can't guess the situation if I don't know anything about it."

Guess that's true.

Either way, I needed to gather some information. Without it, I probably wouldn't be released, and would have to stay here indefinitely.

"E-erm..."

"I don't know who you are, but do shut up."

But I hadn't even said anything yet...!

It seemed like I would be making no progress here.

"Iris," I prompted the girl standing beside me, hoping it would get her to start speaking.

"Oh, erm..."

Iris hesitated, probably because of the glare still directed at her, but she finally raised her head and spoke in a timid voice,

"Erm...Papa?"

"Yes?"

He might be speaking to his daughter, but the council president's voice remained harsh.

"Gasp...! Erm..."

Iris swallowed and cast her head down again.

"D-did I do something wrong?"

The moment she managed to force the question out, the mood around the table immediately turned icy.

Oi! That was the wrong question to ask!

I managed to stop myself before I shouted at her.

Judging by the atmosphere, I could understand why the council president was angry. After everything, Iris still seemed to have no idea of what she'd done. It was like adding oil to the fire.

As expected, the men slammed their fists on the table in a fury.

"What do you mean, did you do something wrong!"

"Do you even understand the consequences of your actions!?"

"President! She may be your daughter, but she has gone too far this time!"

It was a storm of reprimands that made me want to cover my ears. But it seemed like the ones making the most noise were the members unrelated to the two. In contrast, Iris' father remained silent, his lips sealed as he waited for the rest to quieten down.

"Uuh... What is this...?"

Unable to comprehend the situation, Iris' voice sounded tearful as she asked.

While I understood what had caused the outburst, it didn't feel right hearing how most of the reprimands were pointless insults that had nothing to do with the situation at hand.

"I see, so that's how it is."

R seemed like the only person who understood what was going on.

Before I could get her to explain, Iris' father picked up a tiny silver bell resting on the round table and rang it. The high-pitched sound resonating throughout the room seemed to pierce through my eardrums, and soon the room was silent again. That must be some device used to maintain order during council meetings.

“Our planet is currently facing the gravest danger she has ever encountered ever since the start of the universe.”

Finally, the council president started speaking to us...or rather, to Iris, in a low resonant voice.

“In the past, Phenerita was just a planet devoid of our own resources. We slowly built up our financial prowess by importing materials from other planets, processing them, then exporting it out again. You know that, don’t you?”

“.....”

Iris gave a small nod, but remained silent.

“To put it bluntly, we are a planet that probably can’t survive on our own. If, for whatever reason, the other planets decide to stop supplying us with materials, we will all die of starvation.”

The council president ended off with a heavy note, as every member at the round table turned to look at Iris.

I didn’t need any more explanation to understand that the hopeless scenario described by the president was about to come true. Phenerita was headed down the road to destruction because,

“Iris, this is all because you rejected the Satamonian king’s marriage proposal.”

Yes, I knew it.

Unable to comprehend the situation, Iris shook her head.

“But... It can’t be...”

Her voice trailed off, and she could only shake her head mutely.

“W-wait a minute!”

I couldn't take it anymore, and decided to interject. I could feel everyone's gazes immediately turn towards me.

"Who are you?"

I swallowed hard before answering the council president's query.

"My name is Namidare Rekka. As to why I'm here, it's a long story to tell, but I think you're all acting really weird."

"Brat! Get out!"

One of the council members bellowed at me, but the president raised a hand, halting his progress.

"Namidare Rekka-kun. I would want to know why you're here, as well as where and what my daughter had been up to in her absence, but that can wait. However, I wish you can be respectful with your words."

Iris' father spoke like a schoolteacher. In other words, he was someone I'd rather not deal with. However, there was no way I was going to remain silent.

"Everyone seems to be finding fault with Iris, but it was the Satamonian king who forced the marriage proposal onto her, wasn't it? That means she had every right to reject him!"

"...Sorry, but that is out of the question."

"Why?!"

"Because Iris is my daughter."

The president's voice remained emotionless as he said that.

"I am the ambassador of Phenerita. Therefore, anything that grants this planet peace and prosperity will be my priority, and that includes how I choose to deal with my daughter."

"No, the ultimate decision lies with you."

“And I would make decisions that cause the people to starve?”

“Erm! No, but...”

“The Satamonian king is tenacious and overbearing. In the worst case scenario, we could be invaded by his troops. There is just no telling what lies he would concoct in the name of justifying a war against us.”

Do people normally go to such measures over one girl...?

No, it was because the Satamonian king was far from normal, and that was the problem. If he was serious about starting a war, then nobody would be able to stop him. That was probably why everyone in the council was so upset.

The president glanced over at Iris again.

“Iris, you have led a very fortunate life thus far. All your selfishness had also been forgiven, because you are the daughter of the council president. Don’t you think that you should repay everyone’s kindness by taking responsibility for this?”

“.....”

Iris had not raised her eyes from the floor, but her face appeared deathly pale. She probably hadn’t imagined that her actions would lead to this.

Oh, what should I do? I couldn’t think of a way to rectify this situation, because I knew the president was right.

A hush fell over the round table as Iris and I stood frozen.

Just then, the lights in the room suddenly went out.

“What’s happening!?”

I heard one of the council members shout, but it was so dark that I couldn’t see anything.

Everyone started speaking at once, and for a moment, all that could be heard was a chaotic babble of noise. Suddenly, I heard the president's voice ring out, commanding security to investigate the matter.

Not knowing what was happening, there was nothing I could do to help. Just as I was standing rooted to the spot... I suddenly felt a hand tug at my jacket sleeve.

From our positioning, I guessed it was Iris who was tugging at me, and I could feel her trembling.

".....Oh."

Just as I was about to reassure her, the room suddenly lit up again.

However, the light source came not from the ceiling this time, but from one of the walls in the room, which had morphed into a huge screen that glowed bright.

[Geb geb geb, Iris-chwan! You look as adorable as always~]

PART 04

— —

...Accompanying the unpleasant laugh was the appearance on the screen of what looked like a humanoid pig-toad hybrid, with feelers growing out of his bald head. His bloated purple body, with five rolls of fat along his belly, jiggled with every movement. A second purple-skinned male was standing to the side, and in utter contrast, this one appeared to be skin-and-bones.

"And who might these beings be?" R asked in her usual nonchalant tone.

There was no answer, since nobody could hear her, but the council president, who had been staring at the screen with a dour look, spoke up.

“Great King of Satamonia. I do not recall opening a direct line of communication between our planets?”

So that lump was the Satamonian king...?

Hearing that, the king laughed again.

[Geb geb, don't sound so stern. When I heard that Iris-chan had returned, I just couldn't keep calm any longer. Right, Mr Chief?]

And skin-and-bones guy, with that irritating malicious smirk on his face, seemed to be the king's chief officer.

[Yes. Upon hearing the news, our great king personally dashed to activate the communication troops. He even stomped on one of his pets in his panic.]

[Humm? Did I? I don't remember losing any.]

[Because we got it replaced immediately.]

[Hmm~ Anyway, I want one of those super violent gorillas from the planet Jambaria as my next pet.]

Aren't we all getting a little off-topic here?

As if forgetting that they had interrupted a meeting, the king and his chief carried on their animated conversation about pets. Soon, the Pheneritan council members started to grow impatient.

“...Great king, may I enquire your purpose in contacting us?”

[Can't you tell? Obviously it's about my marriage to Iris-chan.]

Iris' expression hardened.

However, the Satamonian king seemed not to notice, despite all the signs pointing at how she had no wish to marry him.

Yet this planet would be in great trouble if she refused.

Everyone in the room turned to look at Iris, as if silently forcing her to accept the proposal.

“.....!”

I wanted to help her, but I remained silent for now, watching her as well.

If she rejected the proposal, there would be an intergalactic war.

And if that really happened...how would I go about winning it?

Defeating the Demon King was just facing a single opponent, but a war was different. It was no longer my one life at stake; if I made a mistake, hundreds of thousands could die. That was the implication of war.

It was too heavy a burden for me to take on alone.

Besides, I couldn't think of a suitable plan to resolve the issue.

Should I really accede to the president's wishes and let Iris take responsibility...? I knew we didn't really have much choice in the matter, anyway.

Then, as if controlled by the collective fervor of those present, Iris slowly nodded, face averted as she bit down on her lip. She was probably suppressing her own feelings, and agreeing for the sake of everyone.

But a single tear rolling down her cheek betrayed her emotions.

Unable to take it any longer, I raised my voice.

“Stop right there!!”

Everyone's gazes immediately landed on me.

“...Rekka?”

Iris had lifted her head as well, looking at me with eyes full of tears.

[Hmm? Who are you?]

“Shut up, pig-toad!”

[Geb!?!]

Having shocked the king into silence, I took a deep breath to calm myself before continuing.

For a moment back there, I had been influenced by the people in this room, and forgotten one precious fact.

This “story” was headed towards a bad ending at full speed.

And until I saw Iris’ tears, I had stood by in silence, thinking thoughts like “it can’t be helped” and “I can’t do anything” ... I’m such an idiot. If problems could be solved by doing nothing, then we wouldn’t be in such a situation right now.

I was brought here to spur this “story” towards a possible happy ending.

I wouldn’t say that what I was about to do was the right solution...but I’ll step forward and stop this “tragedy”!

“All of you, do you really think this is for the best!?”

Everyone in the room stared at me, silently screaming, ‘what are you saying!?’.

But I wouldn’t take that for an answer.

I repeated myself again, facing the council president, who was glaring at me with narrowed eyes.

“What about you, president? Do you think Iris marrying the king is for the best?”

“Young man, please stop. This is our planet’s problem to solve.”

“I’m asking you, do you think this is for the best?”

“...That is not the issue. My duty is to protect the peace of this planet and its people.”

“Shut up! Answer my question! I’m asking, do you really think that forcing your reluctant daughter into marriage is going to grant everyone a happy ending!?”

The president’s face twisted, and for the first time, a hint of rage showed in his eyes as he bit down on his lip and glared at me. The force of his bite broke through the skin of his lip, and the speckle of blood spoke of his true emotions.

“...And what do you want me to say?”

“Nothing, but it would have helped if you had displayed your feelings from the get-go. Right, Iris?”

“Papa...”

Iris’ eyes were red and swollen, but her expression seemed like a burden had been lifted from her shoulders.

There must be nothing more horrible than being handed to the enemy by one’s own parent. Iris must feel so relieved now that she knew her father did not truly wish for her to marry the Satamonian king.

I guess things should turn out alright now.

Then...

[Hey. What are you blabbering about? Are you planning to interrupt my marriage to Iris-chan-geb!?!]

The king, angry at being ignored, yelled on the monitor screen, spittle flying.

R, who had been watching us in silence, let out an annoyed sigh.

“Rekka-san, what do you plan to do now? This may spell an intergalactic war at worst, you know?”

She was right. If that happened, all would be lost.

So I had to act.

I glared at the Satamonian king.

“Of course I’m going to interrupt. Because...I’m going to marry Iris!”

[W-WHAAAT!? What did you say!?]

“Shut up! It was love at first sight! In fact, I came all the way from Earth just to marry her!”

That was stretching the truth, but the king didn’t need to know that.

“I can make Iris happy! I’ll never let a pig-toad like you have her!”

[W-w-who are you calling pig-toad!?]

“Unsatisfied? Then...”

Raising my fist to the Satamonian king’s face, I delivered the final blow of the century.

“...Duel me for Iris!”

[W-WHAT~!? You’re just a brat from some unknown planet!]

“Real men fight with their fists! You can order your army to attack planets, but you’re afraid to go one-on-one in a duel with a mere Earthling!? You’re just a coward, then!”

[GEBBBBBBBBBBUUU!!]

The king's face had turned reddish-purple. I'd probably pushed him to his limit.

"So, what do you have to say, pig-toad bastard?"

I continued provoking the king as I clenched my lightly trembling fist tight, dripping with cold sweat.

My physical constitution probably granted me the possibility of saving a "story", but there was always a chance of failure.

However...aside from provoking the king into one-on-one combat...I couldn't come up with any other solution.

Having witnessed the power of the laser gun manufactured in Satamonia, it was obvious that their reputation as a militant planet was solid. If he brought such weapons to our duel, I would be easily reduced to ashes... But that would also mean that a war could be averted. At the very worst, I would be the only sacrifice.

I'd have time to think of a battle plan later. The most important thing now was to lure him into agreeing to a one-on-one duel.

[Great king. If I may.]

Just then, the skinny chief officer, who had remained silent up till now, stepped forward.

[What is it!?!]

The enraged king spat as he turned around, but skin-and-bones only smiled.

[If you would be so kind, I'd like to share my humble opinion.]

Skin-and-bones started whispering in the king's ear, and slowly, his face turned from the ugly reddish-purple back to its original color. Before long, a complacent smile came to his face, and he was soon laughing again.

[Alright, brat. I accept your challenge.]

“O-OK...!”

Things were going according to plan, but why did I feel so uneasy...?!

[But since you are the one who's coming between myself and Iris, I get to decide the conditions of the duel.]

“.....! Alright.”

Where did that come from? The situation hadn't looked bright for me before, but now with skin-and-bones' intervention, I could feel the worst scenario descending upon me...!

Then, the Satamonian king opened his huge mouth...

[At midnight, a meteor will strike Earth.]

...and delivered the conditions of the duel.

“.....Huh?”

For a moment, I was completely stunned by his declaration.

It wasn't that I didn't understand what he said. My mind just refused to accept it.

I mean... A meteor?

[If you can stop the meteor, then you win. If you can't, then you lose.]

“W-w-wait a minute! So if I lose, the meteor will strike Earth!?”

[Geb geb, don't worry. I'll make sure to send a meteor that's just the right size to annihilate Earth.]

“No need for such details!”

But my anger only fed his humor. The king relaxed against his chair, bellowing with laughter.

[Geb geb geb geb! I don't care how you do it, but your goal is to keep the Earth from being destroyed... I bet you're regretting making me your enemy now.]

"W-wait!"

But the communication had already been cut.

Midnight? A meteor? Earth annihilated if I lose?

...Had I really taken on something impossible this time?

PART 05

— —

The council meeting was soon adjourned, and I was placed under the custody of the council president. However, I was not subjected to any interrogation, just placed under Iris' care as the man shut himself up in his office... He probably didn't see me as a threat anymore, and was leaving me to my own devices, which I was honestly grateful for.

I was brought to Iris' personal quarters and told to rest on the sofa. Iris had excused herself, saying that she would get me some snacks and drinks.

The hands on my watch read 5 p.m.

I had seven more hours before the meteor struck Earth.

"...Just what should I do?"

If there was a way to single-handedly stop a meteor, I wish somebody would teach it to me... If there really was a way, that is.

"R, do you have any idea how to stop a meteor?"

“How about strapping some dynamite to your body and going for a kamikaze mission?”

“...No.”

I would have done it if it was really going to work.

Well, R had said that she couldn't help me with “story resolutions”, so I wasn't expecting her to give me any good ideas anyway... But I was really desperate.

I laid back on the sofa and stared at the ceiling, just as Iris returned with a floating robot bearing a tray.

“Rekka, are you alright?”

“Yeah.”

I didn't want to worry her, but I just couldn't garner up the energy.

Iris placed some drinks and a plate of what looked like cookies on the table before the sofa, before sending the robot out of the room.

We sat in silence for awhile, before Iris hesitantly asked,

“...Aren't you eating?”

“...Sorry, I'll just have the juice.”

I just couldn't bring myself to stomach anything right now, so I just quenched my thirst with some juice.

Iris sat beside me, not touching any of the food.

For some reason, she looked really gloomy too.

“What's wrong?”

“Huh?”

“You look so glum.”

“...You do too, Rekka.”

“Erm! I guess...”

Scratching my head, I sneaked a look at Iris.

“Iris, is your spaceship equipped to destroy meteors?”

“It’s fitted to destroy space debris, but not large things like meteors... Sorry.”

“I see... Argh! I need to think of something fast!”

Hearing my desperate mumbling, Iris turned despondent.

“I’m sorry. This is all my fault.”

“No problem, I was to blame as well.”

“No... It’s all my fault.”

“?”

For the first time, Iris’ voice sounded meek.

I had been staring up at the ceiling this whole time, but now, I turned to face Iris.

Iris looked back at me.

“Rekka, why did you help me back then? You didn’t need to butt into my planet’s problem.”

“Oi oi, isn’t it a little too late to be saying that?”

“...I’m sorry.”

“No, I’m not blaming you.”

Iris seemed to be feeling really guilty. I guess it couldn’t be helped now, but I didn’t want to be the one to cause her to feel this way.

“Isn’t it ordinary to want to help a crying girl? So don’t worry about it.”

That came out sounding more blunt than I meant it, but I didn’t know how else to phrase it.

But it seemed to surprise Iris as she stared at me with wide eyes...before she broke into a smile.

“Rekka is such an idiot.”

“Oh well, everyone says that.”

It didn’t matter to me, since it made Iris smile again.

And then,

“I’ve decided. I’ll marry the Satamonian king.”

“Huh!? What did you say? Weren’t you totally against it?”

For a second, I was floored by Iris’ sudden change of mind.

However, Iris smiled, determined.

“I’m still against it...but Rekka, you and your whole planet are in danger right now. If I give myself to him, he would be satisfied and call this whole stupid duel off.”

“Erm...”

I knew I was supposed to dissuade her, but Iris seemed to have made up her mind.

“...But I don’t want to give my first kiss to that man. So Rekka, please. Will you take my first kiss...?”

Don’t ask me that when your face is all red!

“K-k-k-k-kiss!? W-wait a minute! Calm down!”

“...I’m being serious here.”

She was right, and her serious expression was even more beautiful.

When a pretty girl becomes so insistent, any man would be delighted to grant her wish and kiss her.

But I suppressed that urge with all my might. If I kissed her now, she would happily wed that king, and this “story” would truly head towards a bad ending.

I needed to stop her, and to do so, I had to prove to her that I knew how to stop that meteor.

But no ideas had come to me. Just what should I do?

Just as my brain was trying to come up with something...my pocket started to vibrate.

“What?”

It was Satsuki’s mobile phone, which she had flung at me back at the abandoned factory.

Chapter 4: I’m just a regular person, can I battle the most powerful wizard?

PART 01

— —

“...Is this Satsuki?”

[Rekka! I’m so glad the call went through!]

I had answered the phone doubtfully, not really expecting anyone to answer, and was thus relieved to hear the nostalgic voice of my childhood friend.

I had so many questions, like how the signal from Earth managed to connect all the way to Phenerita...but most importantly,

“Satsuki, I’m glad you’re alright.”

Her call had given the assurance I needed.

[That’s my line! I was so worried because Rekka just disappeared!]

“Oh...! Sorry.”

She had every right to be angry. Besides, I was also apologizing for the fact that I mistook Iris for her back at the abandoned factory.

[*sigh* Seriously... Anyway, Rekka, where are you now?]

“Erm... Outer space, I think.”

[...Huh?]

Satsuki sounded stunned at my extraordinary reply.

“Well, lots of stuff happened.”

In fact, too much stuff had happened, it would be impossible for me to explain it all. I mean, I’d even traveled to another world.

Just as I was churning out an explanation in my mind, a grumpy Iris tugged at my jacket sleeve.

“Hey, Rekka! Aren’t we in the middle of a conversation?”

Then, I heard Satsuki’s voice from the phone,

[Huh? Was that a girl’s voice...? Rekka! Just where are you!?]

She sounded really angry again. What’s happening here?

Cornered by both girls, I couldn’t come up with an answer for either of them.

[...Alright, I'm heading over right now. You'd better explain everything to me.]

"Huh? You're coming?"

But this was outer space... Just as that thought flitted through my mind, the phone in my hand let out a faint blue glow.

[...Reach out to the voice, connect me to him. Teleport.]

As I heard Satsuki chant in a sing-song voice, the glow increased greatly in brightness.

"Uwah!"

"Kyaah!"

A blue shadow suddenly flew out from the blinding light.

Slowly, the brightness dimmed away... And there was Satsuki, standing right in front of me.

"Eh? EEEEEHHH!?"

Ignoring my freak-out at her sudden appearance, my childhood friend calmly gazed around her. When her eyes landed on Iris, sitting next to me, her brows immediately furrowed.

"Rekka, I truly didn't expect to see another girl with you... You'll explain what's going on, right?"

"W-well..."

I cringed. It's been years since I last witnessed such anger in Satsuki. I wanted to run away, but my legs felt weak and I remained rooted to the sofa.

"Ooh, is that what they call a lover's tiff?"

Shut up, R!

I needed to explain how I got into this complicated situation fast...
That's right!

"Iris! Show Satsuki your tail now, hurry!"

"Huh? My tail?"

Iris asked, head tilted.

"Tail? Rekka, what are you talking about?"

Satsuki's expression darkened. She probably thought I was trying to trick her. I looked over at Iris, silently pleading her to comply.

"Whatever. Here!"

Iris raised her tail, which had been lying hidden beneath her butt, and swished it around. The soft silver hairs caught the light, dazzling my eyes.

"Huh? Is that a real tail... Huh?"

As planned, Satsuki's anger was quickly replaced by confusion, and I took the chance to speak up.

"Satsuki, shall we calm down and talk things through?"

"...Alright."

And thus, I narrowly escaped a situation more frightening than the Demon King and the meteor. Phew!

PART 02

— —

As I wished to speak with Satsuki alone, I tried to persuade Iris to leave the room for a while. Her tail thumped angrily against my thigh the entire time, and when she finally left, it was in an extremely grumpy mood.

Everything was just too complicated for me to explain... Furthermore, I still hadn't come up with a good way to tell Satsuki about the mix-up at the abandoned factory... So I decided to let her tell her story first.

"I know you probably won't believe me,"

Before she began, Satsuki gave me ample warning with a disclaimer.

"No, it's alright. I think I'll believe almost anything after what's happened today."

Wizards, aliens, beings from another world, entities from the future... I'd already met them all.

"?"

Satsuki looked dubious, but I signalled for her to continue, commenting that I would explain later.

"I'm...actually a magician."

"I see."

From the moment I saw Satsuki fly out from the phone, I had suspected as much. It was probably her magic that had connected the call between us as well.

My childhood friend looked doubtful, probably wondering why I seemed to accept her confession so easily.

"Rekka, you're acting really weird. You usually hate anything that seems out of the ordinary."

"I still love being ordinary, but it doesn't mean I'll reject anything that isn't."

I might be enbroiled in extraordinary things now, but I was still an ordinary person inside. Harissa and Iris were, too.

“Besides, you’re the one who said it, and I won’t doubt you.”

Satsuki blinked in surprise, before she looked away quickly.

“Hm? What’s wrong?”

“Nothing... Stop staring at me already.”

Her face was partially covered by her hair, but I detected a faint blush on her cheeks.

“...Did I say something wrong?”

“No... I’m just so happy. I always worried that you won’t believe me, and would think I’m weird and dislike me.”

“Why would I do that? We’re childhood friends, right? And you said ‘always’?”

“Since we were in nursery school.”

“What!?”

This girl! I couldn’t take it anymore! Just how stubborn and deliberate she must be, to have harbored this anxiety alone for all this time?

I decided that I really needed to rescue Satsuki.

“Anyway, what’s up with that Messiah guy? He’s a wizard too, right?”

“Yes. He’s after the Great Magic of Creation that’s been passed down through my clan.”

“Great Magic of Creation?”

That’s right. Messiah had called Satsuki the “daughter of Creation”.

"In short, it's a magic that allows the user to access the Akashic Records."

"...What are the Akashic Records?"

R stared at me in disbelief as I interrupted Satsuki once again. Well, sorry for being clueless!

"The Akashic Records is a compilation of everything that has occurred from the beginning of time up till now. With it, one is able to understand all past mysteries, as well as extract valuable information lost to history. Even the events which are happening at this moment are being recorded, which means that it is entirely possible to access top-secret knowledge, such as a nation's war plans, if I so wished."

Even with Satsuki's thorough explanation, there were still some things I didn't understand, but the implication of her last sentence was striking enough. It was a powerful, yet dangerous magic she possessed.

"But that's if I wish to use it for evil means. On the other hand, if I find out about an impending tragedy, I have the means to try to stop it. That is the reason why my clan has been passing this magic down through the generations, in order to safeguard the world against destruction."

"...That's amazing."

I had nothing but words of amazement to describe this majestic purpose, but Satsuki looked slightly pained.

"But I didn't want to inherit this magic. I wanted to be an ordinary girl, so that I can always remain by Rekka's side. I just wanted to have an ordinary romance. If I didn't have this magic, I won't be targeted by Messiah like this..."

"...Sorry for being insensitive."

I'd said it myself just now, that those who embrace extraordinary things are still ordinary people inside. And I, of all people, understood how

ordinary Satsuki is. The Great Magic of Creation was really too heavy a burden for someone like her.

"No, Rekka, you needn't apologize," Satsuki said as she shook her head.

"Those who should apologize are people like Messiah, who wish to use the Great Magic of Creation for their own evil purposes. They are the reason why my clan always had to hide away like criminals... But I may not be able to escape this time. Messiah is well known to be the strongest wizard of the era."

Satsuki smiled in a self-deprecating manner.

"There are rumors that he killed a genie and stole all its magical powers, which made him strong enough to blast entire mountains to pieces. I can never match up to him."

"But Satsuki, you managed to escape his clutches at the abandoned factory, right?"

"It's because I've been training specially for that situation... But Messiah definitely possesses a more powerful magic. I won't be able to escape forever."

"Then how about hiding here? I mean, we're not even on Earth anymore."

"No. Messiah has my parents as prisoners. He's enjoying holding them as hostages and hunting me down, but I don't know what may happen to them should I continue to evade capture."

"Oh! Your parents are... I see."

Leaving her parents to Messiah was not an option. With both running and hiding out of the question, Satsuki's defeat to Messiah seemed imminent. He was well known to be the strongest wizard of the era, after all. Hearing her story, it seemed impossible that she could ever best him.

“So... what exactly is that Messiah guy after? Is there some book with instructions on how to use the Great Magic of Creation?”

If Messiah was targeting her, then Satsuki must possess something he wanted. Maybe I could think of an idea to counter him once I knew what he was after.

“Messiah is after...me.”

But Satsuki’s reply was something I never expected.

“Huh?”

Seeing my dumbfounded expression, Satsuki started to explain.

“Once Messiah seals the Contract of Creation with me, he would gain the power to access the Akashic Records as well.”

“What kind of system is that? If only it didn’t exist, then you won’t be in this situation now.”

“Well, children inherit half of their DNA from each parent, right? So in order to ensure that the next generation will be able to access the Great Magic of Creation, both parents need to possess that power on their own.”

I see. Now that made sense.

But... Huh? Wait. So that meant that the Contract of Creation... It couldn’t be.

“Yes. The one who seals the Contract of Creation with me will become my life partner.”

“W-what~!?”

I could feel a few blood vessels bursting in my head from all the shock.

“That pretentious noble bastard! I’ll kill him!!”

“Calm down, Rekka.”

Satsuki waited calmly for me to settle down before she continued.

“I’m so glad you’re feeling so worked up for my sake, but you can never win against Messiah. You’re not a wizard, just an ordinary person...”

“Grr...!”

It was true. It didn’t matter that I had this supposedly special “Namidare Lineage” in my blood. In the end, I was still just a powerless regular human. I’d never have the power to stand up against a wizard.

But I’d never let that man have Satsuki!

“...But there’s a way out of this.”

Satsuki exclaimed with determination as she moved closer towards me.

We were seated on a large sofa, but she slid close, till our shoulders were touching. I gulped.

Satsuki looked at me, a blush on her cheeks, and I suddenly felt nervous.

“A way out?”

Satsuki’s face turned even redder.

“If Rekka...seals the contract...with me, before he does.”

“Y-Y-Y-You and me? C-C-Contract?”

“The moment I was born, my parents lost the power to wield the Great Magic of Creation. Therefore, I’m the only person in the world who can wield it now. Besides, I can only seal the contract with one person. If Rekka can seal it with me before Messiah, then he would stop targeting me.”

“Erm, wait a minute! I get the idea, but when you talked about becoming life partners, did you mean...”

My mind immediately conjured up erotic images.

Seeing my suspicious reaction, Satsuki seemed to realize what was running through my mind. Turning red as a cooked lobster, she turned angry.

“Rekka, you idiot! O-Of course we won’t do anything like that so suddenly! I-I’m not a pervert!”

“I-I see. I’m sorry. So it’s something simpler?”

Hearing that, I felt a vast sense of relief.

Beside me, R clicked her tongue in annoyance.

I warned my brain not to jump to any more conclusions as I cleared my throat and asked.

“So, how do we seal the Contract of Creation?”

“.....With a kiss.”

“Huh?”

“...A kiss.”



No matter how many times I asked, her answer remained the same.

“You mean *kisu*...the fish?”

“No...the other kind of kiss.”

What other kind?

I hadn't realized that Satsuki had moved so close that she was leaning heavily against me, pressing me against the sofa and preventing any escape.

“Rekka, do you find kissing me...disgusting?”

“Definitely not, but that's not the point!”

In my panic, I tried to think of a way to stop her.

“It won't be good if we kiss just like that... I mean, I'll be taking advantage of you.”

“...That's not true.”

“Huh?”

“I won't ask this of anyone but you, Rekka.”

Satsuki's face was getting closer.

“S-Satsuki...?”

“I'm OK, because it's Rekka...”

“Erm, well, actually...”

“Only you, Rekka.”

My mind was a blank. What should I do now? Share a kiss with my childhood friend? Huh? Why was this happening?

“Kiss now, kiss now.”

R cheered as she clapped her hands. Shut up, you!

Satsuki's lips were almost upon mine.

I knew I should stop her, but I didn't know how. My brain was not functioning, and unable to think, I allowed my body to react on its own.

— —

Notes:

Kisu is the common name for the Japanese whiting fish.

PART 03

— —

BOOM!

Just then, the room door crushed inwards and fell apart with a deafening crash.

And the one who strode in was none other than the owner, Iris. I glanced her way, and noted that she somehow looked extremely angry.

"Hey you! How dare you come here and snatch my Rekka away!"

"...Your Rekka?"

Satsuki narrowed her eyes as she moved away from me, which I was grateful for, but I could sense that trouble was brewing.

"Rekka, what is the meaning of this?"

Satsuki asked with a scary expression on her face. It was a total switcharound from the mood a few moments ago.

As if adding fuel to the fire, Iris cut in.

“HEY! What do you want with my Rekka?!”

Now, Satsuki whipped her head around to face Iris.

“And who are you to Rekka?”

“I’m Rekka’s lover!”

“The Rekka I know will never get that close to a girl he just met... I don’t believe that he has touched you... So you can’t be lovers.”

“But we are! Rekka and I have been sticking together all this while, right? We’re truly in love!”

“I’m Rekka’s childhood friend. We’ve been together ever since we were children, so I’m more important to him than you are.”

“What do you mean, more important!?”

“I mean what I said. We even took baths together.”

“Huh? You mean you can take baths together? What does that mean!? I want to do it too!”

No, I don’t think I would want to take a bath together with Iris in that washing machine-like contraption she had on her spaceship. We’d probably knock into each other.

“That happened when we were children...”

““Shut up, Rekka!””

How did the both of them manage to agree on that?...

I give up.

“I’m cuter than you, so Rekka will choose me.”

“Rekka will never choose his lover just based on looks.”

“Stop speaking as if you know everything about Rekka!”

"But I do. I even know that the mole on his back has a single hair growing out of it."

Huh? Really? I reached behind myself to check.

"You have no boobs!"

"Don't look down on my chest. I'm as endowed as anyone else."

I had no idea what they were arguing about anymore.

"Anyway, there's no need for you and Rekka to kiss! You just have to defeat that Messiah person!"

Unable to win the verbal war, Iris stamped her feet as she stabbed a finger in Satsuki's face.

"I won't be so troubled if I could do that. Messiah isn't just powerful in terms of possessing offensive magic, his real specialty is in impenetrable defenses."

"...What do you mean?" I finally managed to join in the conversation.

"Rekka, you threw a metal pipe at Messiah back at the abandoned factory, right? But it didn't do him any harm. That is the work of his Defense Barrier. It surrounds his entire person, and serves to repel any physical and magical attacks from enemies. It is so strong that even a hundred wizards working together would not be able to destroy it."

"...Aside from a hundred wizards, how strong is his barrier, actually?"

"Well... Even if something strong enough to destroy Earth hits him, he will still survive, I guess. Though the loss of his home planet would be troublesome for him too."

So even a blast strong enough to destroy Earth wouldn't work against him?

It really sounded like he was the most powerful wizard. I could never win against him.

It was ironic, really. The blast strong enough to destroy Earth that Satsuki was talking about was actually going to hit us, no thanks to the Satamonian king.

Either problem was trouble enough on its own, and to have both thrown upon me at once... It was like a cruel joke... Hmm?

“Ehh?”

Just then, something sparked across a corner of my mind.

It was the sole advantage that I had learned in the other world.

Having been dragged into numerous “stories”, it meant that I would not be bound by the rules which usually govern each of those “stories”.

Just like how I defeated the Demon King with the laser gun... Maybe I could ignore the rules of each “story” and try to defeat both the meteor and the wizard together?

I made myself recall everything I had experienced today. Each part of the day, the items I used, the items I didn’t, the people I met... I pieced it all together like a puzzle.

Could it...work? Could it really work? No, I was still missing some pieces of the puzzle. Did I miss something out? The final idea to glue everything together...!

I clutched at my head, almost fainting with the agony of thinking, when Harissa’s face surfaced in my mind.

That’s it! Harissa would be able to help me!

“Hey, Rekka?”

“What’s wrong?”

Iris and Satsuki had stopped their bickering, and were looking at me. They were probably worried since I appeared so deep in thought.

I assured them that I was fine, before I turned to Satsuki.

“Satsuki, you can use the Great Magic of Creation to find out about anything aside from the future, right?”

“Huh? Yes, that’s right.”

“Then please, there’s something I need you to find out.”

“Alright...but Rekka, what are you planning?”

I started to explain my battle plan to the two girls.

In order for them to understand, I told them everything, including all that I’d experienced today, as well as the “Namidare Lineage”. As I explained, their faces slowly darkened.

“So the reason why you rescued me at the factory was because of your Lineage?”

Iris asked uncertainly.

Satsuki remained silent, but she looked worried as she gazed at me.

They must be thinking that I was forced to solve their problems against my will, that I wouldn’t be helping them if not for my Lineage.

“Don’t worry about that. Even though my constitution makes it easy for me to be dragged into ‘stories’, I really hope to rescue the both of you.”

It was true. I had every right to ignore these “stories”, so it was because of my own wish to help them that had landed me in this situation.

So they really had nothing to worry about... I did my best to make them understand this.

“...Yes! Rekka is just so cool!”

“I’m really glad you’re here, Rekka.”

Iris and Satsuki smiled... Was it my imagination, or were they both blushing slightly?

Oh well! Now, I just had to put my plan into action. I asked the girls for any suggestions they had regarding the plan.

"You can do it, because you're Rekka!" was Iris' straightforward opinion.

"It'll be tough, but I don't think it's impossible," Satsuki agreed.

Their encouraging words gave me strength.

"I see. Now we just have to do it, then!"

I only had one goal in mind, and that was happy endings for the girls' "stories"!

Chapter 5: A story that's starting to change

PART 01

— —

While Satsuki gathered the essential information to carry out our battle plan, there was a place I needed to visit.

"Who would have thought I'd be heading back there again so soon," I mumbled as I stared at the bracelet, the Red String, around my wrist.

With this, I just had to wish really hard, and I would be transported to the other world where Harissa lived.

The needles on my watch showed that it was just past 6 p.m.

I had six more hours until the meteor struck Earth... Six more hours to travel to Abraham to retrieve the item I needed.

Iris guided me to a courtyard, where I would be free to utilize the Red String.

“Alright, I’m heading off.”

“OK, let’s go!” Iris replied determinedly as she wrapped her hands around my arm.

“...Iris, you’ll be teleported to the other world as well if you hang on to me like that.”

“That’s why I said, let’s go.”

“No. It’s too dangerous.”

With a fashionable pouch slung over her shoulder, Iris looked ready for travel. When I tried to explain the dangers of her following again, she grew angry,

“You’ve already defeated the Demon King, right? So it’ll be safe there. Besides, Papa has given me back my teleportation device. And the other world sounds so interesting! I won’t forgive you if you abandon me again!”

She insisted as she pressed herself closer to me. Her b-breasts...!

Even with her two soft mounds pressed uncomfortably against my arm, I was glad that Iris was back to her energetic self again. I guessed it was true that there was no longer any dangerous element present in that world, and it probably wouldn’t be an issue taking her along.

“Alright. You can come along, but let go of me.”

“You loser,” R commented.

‘Shut up, you flat-chested girl,’ I almost quipped back.

Ignoring the floating R, I grabbed Iris’ hand and wished hard upon the Red String.

‘Please bring me to Harissa.’

The Red String started to glow with a bright light.

Then, a single red thread rose into the air and formed a circle about 1 meter across in radius. A flaming red space opened up on the other side of the circle, and before I could blink, Iris and I were sucked into the round, scarlet portal.

When I opened my eyes, I was standing inside Abraham’s palace.

The Red String disintegrated and fell off my wrist. I guessed it was a one-time-use item.

“Wow... That felt totally different from warping,” I heard Iris comment from beside me. Her eyes, sparkling with curiosity, were roving around the room along the stone walls.

“H-hero-zama?”

Just then, a voice called out from behind me.

“...Mdm Waitress?”

Turning around, I saw the waitress woman from earlier, who had been so worried about Harissa.

She was blinking rapidly, as if still comprehending the fact that we had just appeared right before her eyes.

“Huh?”

I was sure that we would appear by Harissa’s side... Oh well, I just had to ask the waitress to find out where she was.

“Sorry, where is Harissa?”

“...Not here.”

Her reply wasn’t anything I’d expected.

“Huh? Why not?”

The woman’s eyes narrowed at me in anger.

“Because of you!”

“Me?”

“Because you weren’t ze true hero-zama! Harissa-chan has been accused of being a liar, and is going to be executed soon!”

The woman yelled at me in fury as her shoulders shook, but then her expression scrunched up in sorrow as she buried her face in her hands and started sobbing.

“I-It’s all your fault...”

“Please, tell me! Why was Harissa accused of lying?”

I clearly remembered defeating the Demon King with Harissa.

This “story” should have been resolved.

However, as I listened to the woman tell her story, I realized what a fool I had been.

“...So they won’t recognize me as a hero because I didn’t retrieve the ‘Hero’s Sword’?” I summarized the problem in one sentence.

As we had used the warp watch to teleport into the Demon King’s fortress, there was nothing to prove that we had been there and defeated the King. And to get everyone to believe that we had accomplished it in only two hours... If one really thought about it, the whole thing truly seemed unbelievable.

To add fuel to the fire, I hadn’t even retrieved the “Hero’s Sword”, which would have proven that I really was the hero.

To the others, it must have seemed suspicious that Harissa had summoned an ordinary looking teenager, who had then disappeared from the palace after two hours, leaving the “Hero’s Sword” untouched.

And then?

“Zey assumed that you lost your nerve and ran away.”

It was natural for them to arrive at the conclusion that the woman had just uttered.

Then, having deemed Harissa’s summoning a failure, she had been subjected to her original fate of being executed...

“She insisted right up till ze end zat you were ze real hero-zama. But because noone believed her, she passed zis Red String to me before she was brought away to ze execution grounds.”

“Shit!”

It was all my fault. I had been so hasty to leave this place that I hadn’t even thought of explaining the situation to the King!

“Hey, Rekka! Where are you going?”

“Of course it’s to save Harissa!” I yelled as I tore my jacket sleeve from Iris’ grasp.

“But Rekka, it’s true that you had run away. Even if you go to explain to the King now, they would still think you’re a liar, right?”

“Urgh...!”

I froze, feeling as if a bucket of cold water had been dumped over my head.

Iris had a point.

I had already been labelled as a liar. I would need to produce some proof in order to let everyone believe me.

Calm down...! Think of what I should do now.

I'd have to prove that I was the true hero.

Then, I'd also have to prove that I'd defeated the Demon King.

The latter was more important right now, and I needed to travel to the Demon King's fortress to...

"Damn it! I didn't bring the warp watch along!"

It had been confiscated by the police guards when I entered "Owaria".

Just as I was about to descend into real panic, Iris tapped lightly on my shoulder.

"I have the warp watch."

"Huh? Really!?"

I glanced at her wrist, but saw no sign of the watch...?

"All my devices are inside here," Iris explained as she retrieved the warp watch from the pouch slung across her shoulder.

"This pouch contains a worm hole, so I can store anything inside it. I've even prepared laser guns for Rekka and myself. I've also got sweets and juice and a change of clothes and shampoo and-"

Was she really talking about a worm hole, a portal that connects two separate spaces? Which meant that whatever she'd put inside the pouch would be transported to another dimension, and could be retrieved anytime she wanted them. The aliens' technological advancements were really limitless.

I took the warp watch and thanked Iris.

Alright! Now I could travel to the Demon King's fortress.

“Alright, let’s go retrieve the ‘Hero’s Sword’ first! Madam, could you please lead us to the basement where the Sword is sealed?”

“Huh? A-Alright,” the woman nodded quickly, acceding to my request.

“Thank you. Let’s hurry!”

With the woman leading the way, Iris and I hurried down to the palace’s basement level.

PART 02

— —

The “Hero’s Sword” was sealed in a tiny room, no more than two-by-two meters in length and width. Part of the stone floor in the middle of the room had been carved into a sort of pedestal, into which a two-handed sword was buried.

“Is this the ‘Hero’s Sword’?”

“Yes. It’s ze legendary sword zat zousands had tried to retrieve, zough none of zem had succeeded so far.”

That was probably the reason why no guards had been posted outside the door; the sword could not be stolen. It had been easy to break through the door’s lock with a single toned-down blast from the laser gun.

Now, I just had to retrieve the Sword and travel to the Demon King’s fortress.

Grabbing the Sword’s hilt, I pulled...and nothing happened?

“Huh?”

I took the hilt in both hands and tried again.

“Uurrgh!”

The Sword shifted with a grinding noise, but I couldn’t pull it out.

.....Oh dear. What was going on here?

“S-So you really are a fake hero,” the woman sobbed.

Wait a minute. I might be an ordinary human, but I was definitely the one who saved this world. So why couldn’t I retrieve the Sword?

Just as I had done everytime I couldn’t understand something, I turned to R for help.

“I don’t know. I can’t think of an exact reason why, but maybe it’s an adverse effect from you becoming the protagonist of too many ‘stories’?”

What did that mean...? So I didn’t have the right to retrieve the Sword because I wasn’t a protagonist loyal to this one “story”!? Or could it be that I wasn’t the protagonist after all, and had only taken the real protagonist’s place!?

I hadn’t anticipated this at all. Things were looking bad.

At the worst, maybe I should just proceed to the execution grounds with proof that I had defeated the Demon King?

No, if they accused me of producing false evidence, it would all be over. Ever since its revival, the Demon King had never left its fortress, so nobody in Abraham had really seen it before... In truth, that dragon’s majestic appearance would have convinced anyone, but in its current dead state, there was a high chance that noone would believe me.

Seems like producing proof that I was a hero was the only way to convince the King and his subjects.

“Madam! Do you remember when and how this Sword was sealed, and by whom?”

I needed more information to resolve this issue.

“Of course it was sealed by ze legendary hero-zama for use when ze Demon King revived itself,” the woman answer between sobs, her face a mess of tears and snot.

“Then why was it stuck into stone, instead of being placed into a treasure room or armory?”

“I don’t know. Maybe to prevent it from being used for evil purposes?”

I didn’t seem to be getting anything out of the woman’s answers.

Was I going to be stuck here...!? But I really needed the “Hero’s Sword” in my Meteor Interception Battle Plan...! Shit, why did the legendary hero have to seal the Sword in this manner? ...Wait. Sealed?

“Hey, you said the Sword is sealed. Does that mean some magic is preventing me from retrieving it?”

“Zat’s right. If it was physically sealed, zen any strong man would have been able to remove it.”

I was unable to remove the Sword because I was the protagonist of numerous “stories”. Thus, the Sword’s magical seal had revoked my right to retrieve it.

However, I recalled the one most important thing; my only advantage in this situation.

I didn’t have to retrieve the magically-sealed Sword by force.

I just needed to bring the “Hero’s Sword” out of this place, and I had a scientific tool, manufactured in Phenerita, that Iris had thoughtfully brought along.

Retrieving... Moving... Transporting... And the tool I needed was...

“Iris! Pass me the warp watch!”

“OK!”

I put on the warp watch and grasped the “Hero’s Sword” in my free hand.

“Please help me key in the coordinates. I just need to shift about one meter away from this spot.”

“Understood.”

In less than a second, Iris had keyed in the coordinates.

[Checking coordinates. Warp commencing in 10, 9, 8, 7...]

An electronic voice started the countdown, as I impatiently kicked at the floor.

The warp took just ten seconds to complete. As I had moved only one meter from my original spot, I hadn’t even left the room’s confines.

However, the “Hero’s Sword” was still grasped tightly in my hand.

“Alright!”

Back in the spaceship, Iris had told me that the warp watch was capable of transporting small items together with my person. As the pedestal was carved out of stone rising from the floor, only the “Hero’s Sword” had been transported together with me.

“W-w-what just happened!?”

The woman appeared hysterical, but I had no time for explanations.

“Iris, I’d like to go to the Demon King’s fortress next.”

“I can calculate the coordinates once I have a map of this world.”

“Then it’s to the resource room. Let’s hurry!”

Carrying the “Hero’s Sword”, I left the room together with Iris, but before that,

“Madam! I’ll definitely rescue Harissa!”

I called over my shoulder as we dashed towards the top of the Western tower where the resource room was located.

PART 03

— —

By the time we returned from the Demon King’s fortress, Harissa’s execution was already underway.

Weighed down by cuffs on her wrists and neck, Harissa knelt on a platform before the masses, a haggard expression on her face. An executioner stood wordlessly behind her.

The plaza was absolutely crowded with people, eager to witness the public execution.

The crowd was so thick that it seemed impossible for me to push through, until I saw Iris pick up one person at a time and toss them aside, effectively clearing a way for us to make our way to the execution platform.

On a balcony of the palace behind the platform, a courtier unfurled what looked like a scroll. He was probably about to start pronouncing Harissa’s crimes...and when he finished, the axe would land on Harissa’s neck.

I’d never let that happen!

Hadn’t I already put an end to Harissa’s “story” and her misery!? Happiness was just waiting for her around the corner!

I wouldn’t let it all end this way!

The courtier rolled up the scroll again, before signalling to the executioner on the platform.

Lifting up a huge axe, the executioner made his way to stand beside Harissa. The blade was dull and chipped, but the axe looked heavy enough to cut through her slim neck with its massive weight alone.

“Stop right there!” I shouted in fury, but my voice was lost amidst the jeering crowd before it could reach Harissa.

The executioner lifted his axe.

I yelled out again, but my voice was once again drowned out.

Shit! This couldn’t be happening!

Harissa, can’t you put up a bit of a fight!? Why are you kneeling there so silently!?

She had said that she was a crybaby, but she wasn’t crying now.

There was no expression on her face.

It was clear that she had given up on everything. As if welcoming death, Harissa closed her eyes.

...Hey, don’t be such a fool!

“I told you not to give up, didn’t I!?”

CRASH!

Whoa, heavy! The axe was so heavy! But I managed to stop it. This was truly the “Hero’s Sword” I held in my hands.

“.....”

However, the executioner, his face obscured by a mask, calmly pulled his axe away and raised it again.

Then, Iris lunged at him.

“What are you doing to my Rekka!?”

In a flash, she kicked out!

Thanks to the kick with a force several times that of an ordinary Earthling’s, the executioner flew off the platform.

“Hero-sama...?”

Harissa had opened her eyes, and was staring at me disbelievingly.

Before we could exchange more words, soldiers started to surround us, probably to capture us for interrupting the execution. I needed to do something about them first.

I looked up at the palace balcony, where the King and his courtiers were gathered to watch Harissa’s execution.

“Your Majesty! You recognize this Sword, don’t you!!?”

I raised up the “Hero’s Sword”, which I had used to fend off the executioner’s axe, and a commotion rose up from the group on the balcony as well as the masses. It seemed like the “Hero’s Sword”, together with the legend, was well-known amongst the people of this kingdom.

But I couldn’t rely on that. Rather than try to convince the King, it would be more effective to rouse up the public first.

“I am the true hero, chosen by the ‘Hero’s Sword’! I was summoned by the great mage Harissa Hope from another world to save this ailing kingdom from the Demon King, and I have just returned from his fortress!”



The commotion rose to a roar.

A hero had appeared, had been to the Demon King's fortress, had returned... The anticipation in the masses' eyes grew.

"Everyone, do not be fooled!"

Just then, a courtier yelled from the balcony.

It was the old man who had doubted the fact that I was a hero when I was first summoned to this world. I recognized him right away from his bald head and tiny moustache.

"This child was summoned just this morning! Even if he is the hero, it is impossible that he had travelled to the Demon King's island and back again in such a short time!"

It was a justified accusation, based on common sense.

"Shut up, tiny moustache! I am the hero! Nothing is impossible for me!" I yelled back disdainfully.

I would have loved to explain the wonders of scientific advancements, but since time was tight, I had to do it another way.

That was why I had to produce undeniable proof right now.

"Iris, show them what we got."

"No problem!"

Iris unclasped her pouch and opened it behind her, shielding its contents from everyone's eyes.

Then, a large impact shook the plaza.

From the worm hole of her pouch, Iris pulled out...a roasted dragon head.

The sight of the dragon head, standing taller than a full grown man, was impressive enough. It would definitely convince everyone, who had never seen the Demon King before, that this was really its head. All the people in the plaza stared at the head, as if they had forgotten to panic.

And I was the man who had brought it here, the one who had retrieved the “Hero’s Sword”. There was no way that anyone could not believe that the dragon was the Demon King.

Even if that tiny moustache courtier were to create more trouble, I just had to cut through the barrier surrounding the Demon King’s fortress with the “Hero’s Sword”. With the barrier down, anyone would be able to enter the fortress and see the charred corpse of the Demon King. Nobody would dare to call Harissa a liar then.

I raised the Sword high again, so that it caught the light from the Sun.

“I’ve defeated the Demon King! You don’t have to live in fear of the Demon Army anymore!”

It was several seconds before deafening cheers filled the plaza.

Before the cheering masses could swarm over us, we escaped from the plaza. Harissa’s legs were too weak to run, so I swept her up in my arms.

We moved to a relatively empty location, where we met up with the waitress woman.

“Harissa-chan... I’m so glad.”

“Madam...”

Harissa and the sobbing woman embraced happily.

I let out a relieved sigh, finally certain that I had rescued her.

“I’m sorry to have doubted hero-zama,” the woman apologized between sobs.

"It's alright, don't worry about it. I'm just glad that Harissa is alright."

"T-T-Thank you, hero-sama~" Harissa gushed, with tears streaming down her face, and soon her thin prisoner's garb was stained dark with her tears.

"Hey hey, you're crying too much," I joked.

"Uuuuh~ But my tears and sweat just won't stop coming when I'm with hero-zama..." Harissa mumbled as she wiped away her tears with her sleeve. "Hero-sama has saved my life once again."

"Don't worry about it."

"B-but! I said that I wanted to help hero-sama, but~"

"Harissa... If you really want to repay me, will you come to Earth for a little while?"

"Earth?"

"It's the world where I'm from. Something really bad is going to happen to it soon, and I'd like Harissa to help me save it."

I disliked sounding so weak, but I really needed Harissa's help.

"You really need me...?"

"Yes, please!"

"...Alright!"

Wiping at her eyes once more with her sleeve, an energetic smile bloomed on Harissa's red face.

"I'll do anything to be useful to Rekka-sama! Please let me help to save Earth, Rekka-sama's homeland!"

"Thank you... First, let us go get your clothes and staff, Harissa."

With this, all my characters and cards were in place.

It was time for the battle of the era.

Chapter 6: Still a ways to becoming the protagonist

PART 01

— —

Through Harissa's teleportation magic, we returned to Iris' world and warped through her spaceship to Earth. It was already past 11 p.m., but we still had a little time before the meteor struck.

I'd gotten Satsuki to find out how the Satamonian king was going to drop the meteor onto our planet. According to her, they had converted an asteroid into a meteor projectile, which they loaded onto a battle spaceship equipped with a firing cannon. They would then shoot the meteor into space at high speed, and use teleportation technology to make it appear next to Earth.

The battle spaceship was parked about a million kilometers away from Earth, which meant that the meteor would take a mere four to five minutes to be teleported here. In truth, it was a horrifying weapon capable of destroying planets, as there was virtually no time for anyone to react once a meteor had been fired. It spoke volumes of the Satamonians' evil nature.

Satsuki had also found out that the meteor they were preparing to launch at us was about 15 kilometers in width, roughly the same size as the meteor which had eradicated the dinosaurs.

We navigated our spaceship towards the air space where the meteor would fall. Then, we were lowered to the ground the same way how movies depicted aliens came to Earth to do their cattle mutilations.

I was bad at Geography, so I had no idea where we were, but we were on a vast plain, with cherry blossom trees dotted about the landscape.

As the moon was just rising, we were probably in a different time zone from Japan.

Iris had not descended with us. After dropping us off, she navigated the spaceship high into the sky such that it was no longer visible from the ground. She would be playing her role in our plan from there.

The three of us on the ground set about getting the place ready for the Meteor Destruction Battle. Once we were done, Satsuki and I selected a large cherry blossom tree and settled beneath it, while Harissa made herself invisible with her magic. Now, having beckoned to Messiah with some magic, we just had to wait for his arrival.

My throat felt constricted, as feelings of anxiety about the battle ahead ran through my mind. And the silence that had descended upon us was suffocating.

"How about saying something witty?" R asked as she glanced over at Satsuki.

"....."

Satsuki was silent as she stared at the ground.

That's right... I wasn't the only one who was nervous.

Determined to break the silence, I looked up at the cherry blossoms as I spoke up.

"Guess cherry blossoms aren't really found only in Japan."

At this, Satsuki lifted her head to look at the blossoms too.

"They can be found in the warm belt of the Earth's Northern Hemisphere. This one seems to be of the same variety as those in Japan."

"...By the way, the trees in our high school's yard are in full bloom too. Since you didn't come to school today, you probably haven't seen them yet, right?"

“Yes.”

“Let’s go see them together tomorrow.”

“...Yes.”

A small smile came to Satsuki’s face.

The heavy mood had also lifted slightly.

“We’ve come all this way, so let’s just give it our best shot,” I declared with determination as I clenched my fists.

“I’ll protect you, Satsuki.”

“...Thank you, Rekka.”

And then, the “story”’s climax came upon us silently.

Ten minutes before midnight, a man appeared in the sky and landed quietly before us.

Messiah Candystraps, the most powerful wizard of this era. It had been eleven hours since our last meeting, but his pompous smirk had not changed.

The wizard glanced at me with a slightly puzzled look.

“Are you the young man from this afternoon? I was sure you had run away, never to return.”

“Haha...”

That was how it must have looked back at the abandoned factory, that I had abandoned Satsuki and disappeared on my own...

“Why would I run away from someone like you?” I said with a bold smile.

Messiah’s brow lifted at my mocking tone.

“...Someone like me?”

“Yeah. Why should I run away from an idiot who mistakenly thinks he’s the most powerful wizard?”

“Oh, and who are you to prattle on like this?”

“Don’t you know? I am the one who is the most powerful wizard of this era.”

“What...?”

My words were a direct challenge to Messiah.

Besides, it had been my idea for Satsuki to use her magic to lure Messiah here. In truth, all this was part of a trap.

I knew this man would not turn down a challenge.

It didn’t matter if this was a trap, or who was challenging him, Messiah was confident in his own abilities... In fact, he was so sure of his status as the era’s strongest wizard that he had appeared before us so willingly.

“And what are you planning?” Messiah asked, laughing scornfully.

I twisted my lip into what I hoped was an evil smirk.

“I challenge you to a duel under a Contract. The loser would swear to never lay a hand on Satsuki ever again. And you would release Satsuki’s parents as well.”

I’d heard from Satsuki about the Devil’s Contract, which was used among magicians since its bonds were strong enough to withstand even the strongest magic. If I could win in a Contract bound with Messiah, we wouldn’t have to worry about him coming after Satsuki anymore.

“I accept, young man. But...”

Messiah raised a single finger, as if to indicate that he had one condition.

“Since the daughter of Creation would follow the victor, why don’t we bind her in the Contract as well?”

“What!? You bastard...”

Just as I was about to protest, Satsuki spoke up.

“No problem. I believe Rekka will win, so it’s alright,” she said as she smiled gently at me.

...It would be totally uncool if I were to protest now.

“Leave it to me.”

I wouldn’t lose.

“Then let us summon the Contract.”

Satsuki stood between Messiah and I, and proceeded with the Contract ritual.

“I agree,” I said.

“I agree, naturally,” Messiah added.

The both of us nodded, and Satsuki chanted a spell to seal the Contract. Then, translucent black chains surrounded us, and I felt them wind tight around “something” within me..

If anyone broke the Contract, I could imagine the chains tearing their soul to shreds.

The stage for our battle had been set.

PART 02

— —

In order to prevent Satsuki from being caught up in our fight, I urged her to leave.

"Rekka, please don't die," Satsuki pleaded tearfully before she left.

I smiled back at her.

"Hey hey, didn't you say you believe I'll win? So don't worry."

"...You're right. Good luck, Rekka."

"Yeah."

Satsuki moved to a spot about 50 meters away, where she would be watching the battle.

Messiah and I squared off against each other, with the cherry blossom tree between us.

"I can tell from a glance that you're new to magic. I don't know what you're planning, but I'll show you how your ordinary shallow wit is not going to work against me."

"Heh! I'll look forward to that...as well as your tearful face when you bow down before me."

As I let out a disdainful laugh, I subtly checked the time on my watch.

Five minutes to midnight. It was about time to set the plan in motion.

"Let's do this!"

I kicked off the ground and dashed in a clockwise direction around the tree.

As I ran, I pulled the laser gun from my belt. I'd gotten Harissa to cast an invisibility spell over it after Iris had adjusted the power settings to suit my purpose.

I pulled the trigger, and the gun sent out continuous bullets of light towards Messiah.

“Oh?”

However, the lasers bounced off the Defense Barrier around him and disintegrated.

I had expected this, but it proved once again how strong the Barrier was.

“I had thought you were a novice, but I guess that is not the case?”
Messiah whispered, slightly shocked.

He was probably surprised not by the attack, but by the fact that I had seemingly used magic against him. He was totally fooled.

Then, he raised an arm.

“Now it’s my turn.”

“.....!”

I dashed away, desperate to avoid the attack issuing from Messiah’s fingertips.

“It’s no use, unless you can run as fast as light.”

Pale sparks crackled around the wizard, before it grew into a tiny lightning bolt and coiled around his arm like a snake.

“...This is your end,” Messiah announced as he fired the lightning magic towards me.

No matter how swift, no human could have outrun a real lightning bolt.

That was why I had prepared a few tricks up my sleeve.

The lightning bolt swerved before it hit me and disappeared into the ground.

“Urrgh!?”

Though I'd avoided the direct hit, the force of the bolt hitting the ground sent up dirt and pebbles which pelted me. I raised my arms to protect myself as best I could, but the pain from being rained on by rocks was still intense. I knew I wouldn't be able to survive too many hits like that...but I would be able pull through a few.

"...Did I miss?"

Messiah appeared bewildered. He had probably expected to defeat me with that one hit.

"Hah! You suck!" I yelled boldly, blood dripping from my cheek and down both arms through my ripped clothing.

".....!"

In response to my taunting, he fired a few more lightning blasts.

However, each bolt swerved to the sides instead of hitting me.

The trick behind this was simple.

After learning from Satsuki that lightning magic was Messiah's specialty, we had planted a few space-tech lightning rods which Iris had gotten for us around the area.

Regardless of magic, lightning was still lightning, and it would be attracted to lightning rods more than towards humans.

In order to prevent Messiah from discovering this trick, I had Harissa cast invisibility spells over the rods as well. Paired with the laser gun blasts, it would truly appear to Messiah that I was using magic. Now, he would be thinking that I was using magic to deflect his lightning bolts.

Of course, it would all be over should Messiah choose to utilize another kind of magic, but the difference in our abilities was evident. While my attacks didn't work against him, his attacks were slowly weakening me. The outcome of the battle was obvious, so Messiah would probably choose to feed his ego and continue using his specialty magic...

Though he would eventually see through my plan.

But as long as I held on till then, it would be enough!

30 seconds before midnight...!

“Messiah!”

I screamed at my enemy in a harsh voice as I pointed up at the sky.

“.....What?”

Messiah stopped in his tracks as his gaze followed my finger.

My battle plan was simple. I would lie that I had used my magic to summon the meteor that the Satamonian king had fired at Earth. Then, in order to trump my “magic”, the proud Messiah would intercept and destroy the meteor.

Come on, wizard, work for me!

“Can you stop my magic!?”

I yelled as I dropped my finger in a downward motion, as if drawing the meteor down towards Messiah!

Then we would find out if he was really the strongest wizard of this era.

It was ironic, but I had to trust that my enemy was really as powerful as he claimed to be.

But...nothing happened. Messiah returned his gaze to me.

“...So, where is your magic?”

“.....Huh?”

I glanced up at the sky in panic.

And saw a full moon, shining stars...and nothing else.

There wasn't a single trace of the meteor.

'What is happening!?'

I stopped myself before I yelled out, and looked to R for help, but she just shook her head. Why was she so useless now, of all times! Couldn't you provide me with a little good service!?

Messiah laughed, as if I had just performed the stupidest trick of the century.

"I know you humans so well, trying to bluff your way through up till the end. Putting on airs, directing your own play. It's all good, but deep down, you are all too weak."

"....."

He was absolutely right.

I clenched my trembling fists.

"Enough of this, young man."

The wizard, who had been firing blasts at me, now raised his palm towards the sky.

A stream of lightning started to whirl like a tornado from his palm. The lightning bolts then merged together, growing fatter and larger until it became a sphere.

This was the same attack he had fired at me back at the abandoned factory...!

However, the sphere this time was several times larger.

The lightning Sun -it wasn't exaggerated to describe it as such- looked like it carried billions of volts of electricity, and I could just imagine myself burning to a crisp after being hit by it. Even the lightning rods wouldn't be able to divert this attack away.

This was the true power of the strongest wizard of this era.

Having displayed this overwhelming power, Messiah looked down his nose at me.

“You’ve done well, for someone so powerless... Do feel proud to tell everyone in the next world how you were brave enough to stand up against me.”

“...Powerless?”

Even without him saying it, I knew it in my heart.

I was just a fake, nothing like a true protagonist, with no special reason for existence. Aside from coming up with crazy battle plans, I was nothing more than a powerless brat.

But my clenched fists refused to slacken.

These fists were nothing but a bluff, I had never been in a real fight in my life. It was to be expected, since I’d always aimed to live an inconspicuous, ordinary life.

But I could always clench my fists.

When humans wanted to protect something, we would always clench our fists.

With the determination to protect, we would grasp our fists tightly...and it didn’t matter if our opponent was a wizard, a meteor, or an otherworldly Demon King, we would fight.

It didn’t matter that I wasn’t a protagonist*.

I would fight.

“.....!”

Tossing the invisible laser gun aside, I dashed out with clenched fists.

However, my target was not Messiah.

“Haha! It’s too late to run away now!”

Messiah’s loud laughter reached my ears, but I ignored him as I headed towards my destination.

It was impossible that the Satamonian king was just bluffing about dropping a meteor on Earth. His battle spaceship was parked just nearby, afterall. So why hadn’t the meteor arrived? Could it be that he had meant the meteor would be fired at midnight, rather than the meteor would arrive on Earth at midnight?

Then there was still a chance that Messiah’s attack could be utilized!

“Rekka!”

“Don’t come over!” I screamed at Satsuki and the invisible Harissa, just as they were about to dash over.

If I didn’t defeat Messiah single-handedly in this duel, then the Contract would lose its effect. All the plans we had put in place would go to waste once a third party intercepted the duel.

“I thank you for not involving the Daughter of Creation in this battle. It won’t be nice if she loses her life here. Young man, you really are a brave one. Stupid, but brave.”

Messiah smiled as he lowered his arm.

“It was nice to see you performing your tricks... Now die.”

“Uwaaaahhhhh!”

I screamed as I slid into the shadow of the cherry blossom tree.

“Haha! This isn’t natural lightning, you can’t escape my ‘God’s Judgement’ by hiding under a tree!”

Then, the lightning hammer struck.

Like divine punishment raining down from the heavens upon a sinner.

A blinding light swallowed everything in sight.

— —

Note:

When Rekka said “It didn’t matter that I wasn’t a protagonist.”, an alternate reading for the sentence was also provided as, “It didn’t matter that I wasn’t extraordinary.”

PART 03

— —

The lightning attack scorched everything in sight like an inescapable nightmare. The plains around the cherry blossom tree were burned away, and the air filled with smoke and a burning stench.

I lost all control of my body, and it was hard to tell if I was even still alive or not. My thoughts were thick, clouding up my brain with a strange floating feeling.

Just what had happened to me... Had I failed?

“There, now nobody in the world can stand in the way of our marriage, so come to me. And hand me the knowledge to unlock the Great Magic of Creation!”

It was Messiah’s voice.

He sounded as pompous as always, like he was an actor in a drama... The fact that he was still alive shook my mind, and my consciousness wavered.

“.....”

Yet no matter how much Messiah called, I didn't hear any reply from Satsuki.

No, there was no need for her to reply him... Wait, I'll be up in just a second...!

Despite my mind's impatient urging, my body refused to respond. Why? Shit... Could it be that I'd really died?

The feeling of emptiness within me continued.

"No one will be able to break the Contract now. If you disobey me, your body will be torn apart from the inside. Would you want that to happen?"

The only thing I could do was listen to Messiah's voice.

"Just give up, daughter of Creation."

Her name isn't "daughter of Creation", it's Satsuki.

"You have no choice but to become my bride."

How dare you. Satsuki is my childhood friend.

"If it really hurts that badly to come with me, then shall I use magic to steal your consciousness and make you into a living doll? It doesn't matter to me, as long as we seal the Contract and I gain access to the Great Magic of Creation."

...I'll send you flying if you keep talking that way!!

Marriage is about two people bringing happiness to each other. That's normal. Yet you see Satsuki as nothing more than a tool. As her childhood friend, I'll never forgive you for doing that!

My boiling rage served to stir my body back into consciousness.

Clenching my fists, I stood up amidst the smoke.

“Was that your marriage proposal? That was totally unromantic.”

“What!?”

As Messiah exclaimed in bewilderment, I patted my clothes free of dust. Aside from being coated in soot, my body was more or less intact. I guess it was only my consciousness which had received a momentary blow.

“B-But how!?”

For the first time today, Messiah’s expression showed a hint of panic.

“That’s the least of your worries now, I think?”

I ignored his question as I pointed up at the sky once again.

Just then, the world, previously bathed in moonlight, was suddenly shrouded in darkness... Then brightness returned again. Yet it was not the gentle light of the moon and stars. This glow was intense, seemingly burning up the entire sky... It was the glow of crimson fire, as the meteor sent to destroy Earth fell through the atmosphere.

“This is my greatest magic.”

“— —!?”

Alright, the rest is up to you, most powerful wizard.

Live up to your famed namesake and save the Earth for me.

“Shit! What is this magic!?”

Messiah was in a foul mood, which triggered him to act fast. In an instant, he had summoned more than ten lightning cannonballs of “God’s Judgement”.

“Don’t underestimate Messiah Candystrips!”

The scarlet burning meteor collided head-on with the numerous lightning balls.

As the lightning, like destructive torrents, and the scalding meteor crashed into each other, the dark dome of sky above us lit up for a moment. The wizard's lightning attack had decimated the overwhelming military might the aliens were so proud of.

It was truly an awesome sight, worthy of a manga or light novel climax.

In a few minutes, it was over.

"As if you can ever win against a powerful wizard like me!"

Messiah hollered as he smashed the final piece of the meteor into dust.

pant, pant, pant...gulp!

Messiah caught his breath as he drifted back down to the ground. He didn't fall to his knees, but I could tell that he was a mere shadow of his former self.

The pieces of broken meteor would probably catch fire from friction with the atmosphere and burn away. Any remaining pieces would then be destroyed by the weapons equipped on Iris' spaceship.

The Meteor Destruction Plan was a success.

Now, I just had to defeat the era's most powerful wizard.

"WAAAAAARRRRHHHH!!"

I bellowed as I dashed out of the smoke.

"What!?"

Messiah turned towards me, a surprised look on his face. I guess he didn't manage to sense my presence.

This was my only chance to get close to Messiah, as the destruction of the meteor probably sapped most of his magic and focus.

I was close enough that he had no time nor space to fend off my attack.

My attack should hit home.

Normally, the outcome of the battle should have been decided then.

But Messiah just let out a small smirk.

It seemed like the Defense Barrier which surrounded the wizard was still intact.

Satsuki had said that even a hundred wizards wouldn't be able to break through it.

That was also the reason why Messiah was the most powerful wizard.

And the reason for that composed smile.

But then, I sliced the invisible "Hero's Sword" horizontally, cutting through Messiah's Defense Barrier.

"What!?"

"— —!!"

Hearing his cry of dismay, I immediately twisted my wrist backwards.

To explain things, I basically had Harissa cast an invisibility spell over the "Hero's Sword", then stuck it into the roots at the base of the large cherry blossom tree. It was fitting that this Sword, so famed for being able to slice through magic, was really being utilized in a fight against a wizard. I would have used it right from the start, but if Messiah were to realize its power and modify his defenses accordingly, then it would have all been for naught. Thus, I had been waiting all this while for the perfect life-or-death situation to deal the ultimate blow.

This was the final piece of my plan.

With Messiah's "God's Judgement" attack and Defense Barrier gone, the battle was over!

"Let's end this now!"

Twisting my wrist, I took another swing at Messiah with the "Hero's Sword".

"Uwaaaarrgggh!"

Messiah's scream echoed through the air, and was soon cut off.

The storm, which had been whipping through the plains, died down, and silence returned to the place.

But there was no one around to ring the bell and announce the outcome.

So I remained vigilant in battle-mode, gripping the handle of the sword tight.

"....."

Someone, anyone, hurry and put an end to this situation...!

As if my mind had been read,

".....Why?"

Messiah, with a trickle of blood flowing from where the invisible blade rested against his neck, whispered.

"I don't know how...but my Defense Barrier has been destroyed, I can feel it. So why haven't you killed me yet?"

"That's my style...unless you refuse to admit defeat."

Wasn't it normal for people to refrain from murdering someone else?

Keeping up my tough act, I glared down at Messiah.

"...Alright. I admit defeat."

As decided upon by the Contract before the battle, Messiah would never come to lay a hand on Satsuki ever again. Her parents would be returned safely as well. This calls for a celebration.

Finally, I relaxed my grip on the handle. I wanted to sink to the ground with relief, but I couldn't do that right now.

There was still one last thing to do.

PART 04

— —

When I opened my eyes, I was face-to-face with the dumbfounded council president of Phenerita.

"...So you really can teleport with this device," Iris' father mused as he stared closely at Satsuki's mobile phone. I didn't really have the time to explain how this worked nothing like a warp watch, but because the phone was imbued with magic.

"Mr. President."

"Yes, let us open a direct line of communication with Satamonia now."

After briefly explaining my plan to the president, he led us out of the room and we headed down the corridor.

In order to prevent the Satamonian king from backing out of this lost duel, we had chosen to return to Phenerita via magic rather than using Iris' spaceship. I didn't know if the Satamonian king would create a mess now that things were not going in his favor. In the worst case scenario, he might fire another meteor at Earth, or even involve Phenerita in the duel as well.

"Have you really collected all the relevant information?" The president asked as we travelled up the elevator without walls to the highest level of "Owaria" tower.

"Of course. I won't be here if I didn't."

"You're right. You are indeed more trustworthy and competent than you look. If you weren't, I doubt you'd have made it back to Phenerita alive."

"...That was a compliment, right?"

I felt that I had been insulted in some way.

Just then, the president cast a quick glance behind me.

"I see that you have gotten another girl to tag along...?"

Erm, why did his expression suddenly look thrice as scary compared to a moment ago?

"Well, I needed them to help me."

"I was shocked when Satsuki-kun first appeared, but it seems like you really are popular with the ladies, not just Iris."

"Umm. Well, Harissa has been going on about wanting to repay me, and I've said countless times that Satsuki is just a childhood friend. And about being Iris' lover, it was purely because she initially wanted me to help her out. I'm definitely not popular with girls."

".....Hmm."

For some reason, the president's frown deepened.

"Of all people my daughter had to pick..." I heard him mumble under his breath.

"Rekka-san, your level of thickheadedness is powerful enough to start a war."

R nodded as she mimicked the president's expression.

.....Just what were they all talking about?

Then, we reached the highest level of the tower, and arrived at the round table of "Owaria".

The lights around the round table had been dimmed, and the monitor on the wall showed the disgusting face of the Satamonian king. His dull eyes fixed upon me the moment I entered the room, as two or three veins popped up on his toad-like face.

[You brat! How dare you—]

"Kyaaaaaaahhh! I-I-It's a frog-pig hybrid demon!"

Harissa screamed and sank to the ground the moment she spotted the Satamonian king's face.

Thanks to her outburst, the Satamonian king's rant was cut off, and for a moment, he could only open and close his mouth in silent fury.

It was all we could do to contain ourselves. Iris looked like she was seconds from bursting out in laughter, while Satsuki had a hand over her mouth, trying to stifle her giggling.

"Great King of Satamonia, I am sorry to have kept you waiting."

The president, the only calm person amongst us, greeted the king as he signalled for the girls to take a seat.

I alone remained standing, taking up the best position to glare at the Satamonian king.

As usual, the skinny chief officer by the king's side worked to calm him down. The skin-and-bones guy seemed really proficient at controlling the king's bad temper. I also remembered how he was the one who suggested launching a meteor at Earth.

I wouldn't lose to them again, and I would ensure that we settle this issue right now.

I decided to deliver the first blow.

"King, I'm sure you are aware that I have won this duel. You should quietly give Iris up."

[.....]

As expected, the Satamonian king refused to admit defeat, glaring at me silently. Even with the odds against him, his obstinate attitude didn't budge. His reaction was really typical of a politician.

However, the fact was that he'd lost. His face slowly turned reddish-purple, though he still made no move to deny the fact.

Just then, Skin-and-bones stepped forward.

[There are no written terms and conditions regarding the duel. Since everything was decided upon verbally, we see no need to comply with you.]

"Oh?" I turned to face off against my real enemy, the skinny chief officer, "then it just goes to show how useless galactic kings are, since they can't even keep a promise like a man."

[It is fact that our king was the first to seek Miss Iris' hand in marriage. You then butted in with your strange duel, and our king chose to humor you by playing along in your little game. The outcome of the duel will have no effect on the marriage between our king and Miss Iris.]

[T-That's right!]

The Satamonian king bellowed, backing up his chief officer, but I refused to look at the pig-toad.

I needed to win this verbal war against Skin-and-bones, not the king.

“Does that mean you won’t give up on Iris?”

[Of course not. The king sees no reason to do so.]

“No reason...?”

Which meant that with the right reasons, he could be persuaded otherwise.

If the Satamonian king was really in love with Iris, then no amount of reasons would be able to make him give her up. Not that I had any experience in the matter...but any love that could be swayed by reason must not be true love at all. It was nothing but pure desire.

I wouldn’t let such a man have Iris.

“Satsuki, pass me the list.”

“Here. I’ve summarized it so that even Rekka will be able to understand it.”

“Thanks...and no thanks for the subtle insult.”

I knew that Satsuki wasn’t unwilling to help Iris...but it didn’t mean she would be eager to lend her aid. Did she have a thing against horses?

“Dooooom,” R declared, effectively summarizing the tense mood.

Well, that wasn’t the important thing now. I took the bundle of papers from Satsuki’s hand and shook it out, revealing a long list which I started to read off.

“Great Galaxial Almanac, Year 707 of the Gregory Cycle. Satamonian dispatched their 7th armada fleet to the unknown 3rd planet in the Auroll System located in unregistered galaxy number 305748.”

[What...!?!]

Skin-and-bones’ eyes widened as his eyes fixed upon the scroll in my hands.

I continued to present the information written on the list. In short, it was a full record of numerous evil deeds carried out by order of the Satamonian king behind closed doors. Satsuki had returned with all this information after searching through history with the Great Magic of Creation, and Iris had helped to pick out the most incriminating pieces.

Unfortunately, I didn't understand more than half of what I was saying, but it was easy to tell that these aliens were engaged in shady dealings.

"Great King... You bastard...!"

Iris' father, who had been respectful to the Satamonian king all this while, swore in anger as he thumped his fist upon the round table.

Both the Satamonian king and his chief officer's faces had turned bluish-purple. It was expected, since all their evil doings were laid out in the open.

[You brat...]

Skin-and-bones' face twisted as he glared at me.

"You understand where all this is going, right? Give up on Iris."

[...Do you have evidence to support all those things you said?]

"I have no solid evidence, but with this list, investigations can be launched to probe into the matter."

Since the information had been collected by Satsuki, it was all truth, and I didn't think it would be impossible to gather the proof we needed.

However, I was careful not to push the issue. Satamonia was a powerful militant planet in the Great Galaxy Commonwealth, afterall. The plan might backfire if I threatened them too much.

I just needed them to agree to a compromise. Even without evidence, Satamonia's standing in the Commonwealth would definitely be jeopardized if this information was made known to everyone, especially to those planets whom the Satamonians regarded as enemies. In

addition, they had no idea how I'd managed to compile this list, and that would help to sow more seeds of doubt in their minds.

"From now on, you will leave Iris and Phenerita, and of course Earth, alone. If you can promise that, I'll promise to keep the contents of this list secret from the Great Galaxy Commonwealth."

Now, it was up to Skin-and-bones. Would he choose to place his planet's political position in peril, or dissuade the king from his selfish marriage demands?

[.....Great King, let us accede to their request for now.]

[W-WHAAT!? But chief!]

The king turned to Skin-and-bones, adamant, but the latter just shook his head.

[If that list goes public, our kingdom will be doomed. So please, let us retreat while we still can. Show these people how gracious and generous you are.]

[U-Uuh... Well, I guess you're right.]

With a few carefully placed words of praise, Skin-and-bones managed to placate the king, who then turned back to us with a deprecating smile.

[Brat, considering how much you've gone through to prove yourself today, I will let you off this time. Be grateful. Geb geb geb geb.]

With that jarring laughter, the monitor screen turned black, and the lights in the room brightened.

".....Phew!"

I sank bonelessly into an empty chair, all energy sapped from my body. That's right, I was still injured from the battle with Messiah. Damn, I probably can't stand anymore...

To think that all this had happened in the span of one day.

Beings from the future, wizards, aliens, otherworldly people... Just how many strange creatures had I met in this short time? It was just too extraordinary.

Then, R, who had been tagging along with me throughout the entire day, dropped before my face again. She was hanging upside down, just like how she did when I first met her, as she saluted me.

"You did a good job at not dying."

Stop speaking as if you really expected me to die...

Oh well, it no longer mattered now. I just wanted to sleep. Right now. I had school tomorrow, but if I managed to get to bed now, I could still squeeze in seven hours' worth of sleep. That's right, sleep sounded good. Let us all master the art of sleeping...

"REEEEEEEKKA!"

"Oof!?"

And my dreams were shattered.

Overcome with emotion, a red-faced Iris climbed into my lap and embraced me in a bone-shattering hug.

"Rekka, Rekka, Rekka! Thank you, Rekka! I'm free now. I can be with Rekka as much as I like."

Erm, well... My spine was groaning with pain as it was crushed with arms numerous times stronger than a normal Earthling's. It wasn't even funny anymore... Ah, I can see a flower field...

"Hey! Let go of Rekka!"

Satsuki interjected as she grabbed the collar of my shirt, trying to drag me away from Iris. Hey, now you're choking me. I'm going to die, I'm really going to die!

"T-That's right! Rekka-sama is my hero-sama!"

And why was Harissa tugging on my leg now!? I felt myself being pulled in opposite directions. Was my upper body going to say goodbye to my lower body just like that!?

But...shit, my consciousness was really...

"Oh dear."

The last thing I saw before I blacked out was the side profile of R's utterly defeated look.

Epilogue & Prologue 2: Is this a happy ending?

PART 01

— —

"So, what are you going to do?" R asked.

"...I don't know," I huffed in annoyance as I laid my head on the desk.

After that crazy day, I should have returned to my life as an ordinary high school student... But now, another problem had presented itself.

It happened right after Iris sent everyone back to Earth on her spaceship...

~~~~~

"Aaaahh! Oh no, how do I return to Abraham!?" Harissa screamed.

"Can't you use the spell that allowed you to travel here in the first place...?"

"I only know how to open a unidirectional portal from Abraham to Earth, but not the other way around."

“W-Whaaat!?”

I didn’t really understand why, but it seemed like travelling in different directions between worlds required different spells.

Now that was a real problem.

“I’ve already used up the Red String... Do you happen to have any more?”

“I do, but it can’t be used if it has not been tagged to a specific person...”

“I see...”

What should we do? At this rate, Harissa wouldn’t be able to return home.

“Poor Harissa-san. She doesn’t have any place to stay in this world, nor does she have any money. She’ll probably die homeless at this rate.”

R whispered these ominous words quietly in my ear.

We needed to find a way to solve this problem, but R was right... Guess I didn’t have a choice.

“Harissa, if you don’t mind, you can stay at my place while you search for a way to return to Abraham?”

Harissa, who had looked utterly despondent, suddenly glanced up at me.

“Huh? I-Is zat really alright?” She asked, reverting to her hometown accent.

“Hey!”

“Rekka...!”

For some reason, both Iris and Satsuki were glaring at me as they protested, yet Harissa paid them no heed. Grabbing the front of my shirt and shaking me back and forth, she asked again,

“It won’t be too much trouble!?”

The material of my shirt was stretching...

“Well, I was the one who asked you to come to Earth, so I guess I have to take responsibility for my actions.”

“R-responsibility...!”

Harissa’s face instantly turned beet-red. I had no idea why she was blushing so hard like a tomato, even her ears were red, but it didn’t seem like she was against the idea.





But why were the other two girls behind me so agitated?

“What is this!? I won’t accept it!” Iris shouted.

“Me neither. I won’t let my childhood friend sink into lolicon,” Satsuki added.

“Who’s a lolicon!?” I protested.

“Harissa-chan is so young.”

“I’m already thirteen! I can get married if I want to!” Harissa announced with a smile.

I guessed thirteen was considered an appropriate age for someone to get married in Abraham. Hey, that’s not the point!

“...I know! Harissa-chan can stay at my place instead,” Satsuki offered.

“Sounds good!” I agreed excitedly.

However,

“No! I want to live together with Rekka-sama!” Harissa protested vehemently.

Things were starting to look bad.

“Then I will live with Rekka as well!”

“What are you saying!?”

I couldn’t understand the reason behind Iris’ unexpected decision.

“...But there’s no other option. Harissa has nowhere to go. Satsuki, you’re still living with your parents, and since I live alone, it’s best for her to stay with me instead.”

“Yes!”

“.....”

Harissa was the only one who accepted my reasoning, while the other two glared at me like I was a pile of dirt.

“...Promise that you won’t do anything funny,” Satsuki demanded.

“Why must I make such a strange promise?”

The whole situation was really pushing me to tears.

“Be warned that I know you well enough to tell when you’ve done something you shouldn’t have,” Satsuki added, further wounding my pride.

“Alright...” I agreed, no longer possessing the energy to argue.

With that, Harissa’s problem was resolved, and we said goodbye to Iris.

“...Yep. See you soon!”

With that cheery greeting, she returned to her spaceship and soon disappeared up into the sky.

“?”

Now that I thought about it, Iris had suddenly gone quiet during our discussion just now. It was as if she had something on her mind...

However, I was just too tired to think much about it.

“...Well, I’ll see you tomorrow then, Satsuki... I mean, later today at school.”

“Yes. Please get some rest.”

Satsuki and I said our goodbyes and parted ways.

I was exhausted, but I tidied up my parents’ bedroom for Harissa to sleep in, before returning to my room and diving onto the bed.

Ahh, this is it! I’ll be asleep immediately. Within the next five seconds.

“Rekka-san, Rekka-san.”

“Please, just... let... me... sleep.”

I heard R calling out to me, but I waved her away and closed my eyes.

## PART 02

— —

After going through such a crazy day, I couldn't help but feel slightly sleepy the next day. When I first woke up, I couldn't stop myself from falling back asleep again, which meant I would be late for school... Whatever, good night.

“Hey! Rekka!”

“Uwaaah!?”

Suddenly, someone yanked my blanket off my body, and I tumbled out of bed.

Wait, R is unable to touch any physical object, and Harissa doesn't know my reporting time for school... So who had woken me up? The answer stood before me as I opened my eyes.

“S-Satsuki?”

“Please get up. You'll be late, you know?”

There was Satsuki, looking as if she had every right to be in my bedroom. She was already dressed in her high school uniform, for the first time since she missed yesterday's ceremony. It made her look mature and adult-like.

"Huh? Erm, anyway, why are you in my room, Satsuki...? Did I forget to lock the door?"

"I received the keys from uncle Jigen. He told me to make sure that his son won't fall into his lazy habits now that he is living alone."

"That shitty old man...!"

Why didn't he inform me earlier! What if I'd gotten used to the idea of living alone, then she barges into my room and sees those types of secret books scattered all over the place!?

Fortunately, she had come in before that had a chance to happen... But I needed to be much more careful from now on. It would be devastating if my family and childhood friend found out that I owned those books.

"...I see that Harissa-chan is sleeping in a different room."

"Of course."

"That's good. I was ready to use magic to tackle that problem."

I wondered what kind of magic Satsuki would have used against me if Harissa and I had indeed slept in the same room...

This whole situation might prove even more tricky than when I lived with my parents.

*\*sigh...\**

"Don't sigh so early in the morning."

"Now whose fault would that be...? Anyway, have your parents returned safely?"

"Yes, they are alright now, and happier than I expected to find them."

"I see. That's great."

"Yes. Oh, that's right. I've made breakfast, so get Harissa up and we'll eat together."

"Oh, thanks."

I quickly got dressed, then met Harissa along the corridor before we both proceeded downstairs. Since Harissa's robes were still in the wash, she was dressed in my mum's pajamas which she had borrowed last night. The clothes were really too big for her, though.

"We'll need to bring you shopping for clothes, Harissa."

"Alri- *yawn*..."

Harissa's reply was cut off by a massive yawn.

We washed up together at the bathroom sink, standing side-by-side, before heading to take our seats at the dining table. Bowls of rice accompanied by grilled fish and miso soup were laid out on the table. It was the example of a perfect Japanese breakfast.

"Itadakimasu," we chimed, putting our hands together, before picking up the chopsticks and digging in.

"Wow! As expected of Satsuki, even the rice is delicious."

"This is really tasty! I'm so glad I've come to this world!"

"Thank you," Satsuki replied with a smile. "I'll be coming every day to make breakfast, so just let me know if you have any requests."

"Huh? Every day...?" Harissa and I asked at the same time.

Satsuki's eyes narrowed.

"Is there a problem?"

"No," we answered obediently.

But why was she doing this...? And I somehow had a feeling that this was only the start of a day full of surprises.

And the next one came after Satsuki and I reached school and started our first period of homeroom.

"Well, this is sudden, but a transfer student has just joined our class."

"Hi! I am Iris-chan!"

The girl who appeared right behind our homeroom teacher was none other than Iris, with a brilliant smile on her face.

"So, Iris-san will sit-"

"Teacher, I'd like to sit beside Rekka!"

"...Oh, alright then."

Hey, teacher! Don't let that happen!

Iris was humming happily as she took a seat to my left. By the way, the seat to my right was occupied by Satsuki... Her expression was even scarier than what I'd seen this morning, and it made me want to run away.

"Do look after me, Rekka."

"O-OK..."

"Satsuki, please look after me too."

"...Of course."

Oi oi, don't get into a fight with me trapped in the middle. Anyway, why are the two of you on such bad terms? Sparks are even flying between your eyes.

"Oi, Iris. Why are you back here on Earth? Didn't you return to Phenerita?"

"I went back to beg Papa to arrange some things for me~ Since you did us such a big favor by defeating the Satamonian king, it was easy for me to convince him to let me come to Earth as a transfer student."

The frightening, stoic face of Iris' father surfaced in my mind...

"But why did you decide to come to Earth?"

Iris' cheeks reddened.

"Well~ Isn't it obvious? I'm here to train to become a bride. B-R-I-D-E."

"Bride? Whose bride-...hey! Uwah, don't hug me!"

"Of course I'm your bride, Rekka! You said it was love at first sight when you first laid eyes on me, right~?"

"That was just to provoke the Satamonian king...and your chest is pressing against me, please let go!"

"No~ I won't let go~"

"Please!"

Everyone in class is staring at me! I hate being the centre of attention!

Beside me, Satsuki wore a terrifying expression on her face. Wait, all the other boys in class looked really angry too.

"...Iris-san. Please let go of Rekka."

"No," Iris rejected Satsuki's request bluntly as she pushed her squishies against me again...





Erm, everyone, please understand that I can't just shove a girl away, which means that I'll be defeated by these soft objects of desire.

But of course nobody would understand.

"...Just forgive me already."

A girl whom I'm obliged to let stay in my house indefinitely, a childhood friend who insists on being a part of my life from morning till night every single day, and a beauty whom I'd just met yesterday becoming a new transfer student in class... Just how did I end up in such a severe situation?

Someone, please save me...

## PART 03

— —

...In the end, I learned that this whole fiasco was not only my own fault, but R's as well.

"Erm, remember how I told you at the start that the 'All of War' was started by all the 'heroines' you saved? Well, actually, not all the 'heroines' are involved in that scenario. Some of them were alright with parting ways with you after you saved them, while others decided to leave you of their own accord. So only about eighty percent of all the 'heroines' you saved are involved in the 'All of War'... However, since I've arrived from the future and met up with you, you've actually been dragged into my 'story', which will be resolved by you choosing one of the 'heroines' you'll save and preventing the war. In short, you are the protagonist of my 'story' as well, the 'heroines' you meet are all 'characters', and all their stories are just events which you are going through in order to resolve my story. That's the reason why the 'heroines' won't leave you, and will slowly accumulate by your side."

“...What!?”

“Hmm? You don’t get it? *\*sigh\** Oh dear, guess I have no choice then. I’ll repeat all of that in simpler terms, so Rekka-san’s poor brain can understand me,” R sighed as she shook her head, before stabbing a finger in my face.

“Rekka-san, say goodbye to your miserable, insignificant, unpopular, grey youth, and hello to a debauched harem world of love, desire, and bittersweet fragrances... Does that make sense?”

“Not really...”

I clutched at my head as I laid back down onto my desk.

“I don’t really get all the details, but as long as I don’t pick a ‘heroine’, the girls will just keep coming?”

“You got it, Rekka-san. Having a harem sure is every man’s dream, huh?”

“You’re so annoying!”

...And everyone in class stared at me, their gazes boring painfully onto my skin. Nobody could see R, which meant I must have looked like I was shouting at noone. Shit...!

The exhaustion from yesterday caught up with me again.

Satsuki, Iris, Harissa... and R. A harem? There’s only four of them, and I’m already so tired. Any more, and my stomach would burst from all the stress!

“If only I can have one ordinary person to fall in love with!”

“Yes, so hurry up and decide on that one person.”

“You make it sound so easy...”

We were having a short break time. Having just finished physical education, I still had some time to spare before the next lesson, as the girls were still in the changing room. For a short while, I could finally be alone. Now would be the time to rest...

Just as I was closing my eyes, the classroom door swung open with a bang.

"Rekka-sama! I got a little lost, but a kind person pointed me in the right direction, and I managed to find my way here to deliver your lunchbox!"

There was Harissa, speaking energetically and waving a lunchbox in her hand, when she should have been at home.

While I was glad that she hadn't got truly lost... I was less enthusiastic about the fact that she'd turned up in school still wearing pajamas. Stop looking all innocent like that...

Then, Satsuki and Iris appeared.

"Harissa-chan, what are you doing here?"

Satsuki asked calmly, yet her eyes narrowed at the lunchbox in Harissa's hands. By the way, if I remembered correctly, I'd seen Satsuki preparing two lunchboxes this morning in the kitchen.

"Rekka, I'm hungry after all that exercise. Let's go for lunch!"

That was Iris, totally unaware of this situation. Anyway, this was only fourth period.

The otherworldly girl and the alien started arguing about who I should eat lunch with, while Satsuki stepped in as well, refusing to let either of them have their way. I just wanted to eat lunch alone...

Soon, I would be forced to make a decision on who I should eat with...

Unable to make such a choice, I made my escape from the classroom.

“Wait!”

I heard all three girls shout as they started giving chase.

“Wow, you’re like a real-life romantic comedy protagonist,” R commented.

“And whose fault is that!?”

This was not the ordinary day I had pictured for myself!

But this would probably be my life from now on.

“Someone, anyone, please save me!”

Dashing down the corridor, I sent an SOS to a super hunky prince hero who must surely exist somewhere out there.

Or not. Gyaaaaa!



Red String



Eyes slightly slanting when he's serious



Warp watch

Without cap



Warp watch

Tucked-in shirt

Namidare  
Rekka



Laser gun

Detachable

Slim & simple,  
easy to stick  
into his belt

Watch



俺が助けて  
世界ガッタル  
黙示録!!

★ Pattern on pocket  
and socks



★ Button



Original  
cap's logo

which became  
(R)

Shoulder mantle  
to offset the  
dull color scheme

R-chan

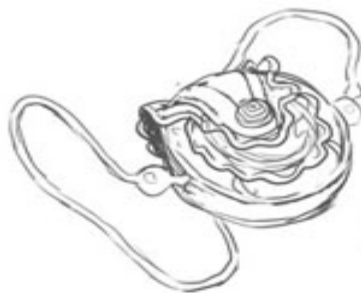
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絵: 和狸ナオ



Ootomo Satsuki



4th dimension pouch

Strings attach by themselves to the Pouch. Made of mystery material. Convenient item that can expand and shrink (to some extent)



This one's a clunky design too. I'll try to make it look slightly more fashionable.



Hair tie

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俺が助けすぎ  
ヒロインまで  
世界がリトル  
黙示録!?

Alien strength is awesome!



Poor fashion sense?



Girl's uniform

World normal loafers look better?



Iris Pheneritas Psyfactor



<Back>





Doesn't he look  
pretty with this expression?

Mantle secured  
by a buckle

Wears  
gloves

Messiah  
Candystraps

No wings?

俺が助けすぎ  
ヒロインを  
世界がリトル  
黙示録!?



Demon  
King

Ribbon  
at neck



Finger accessories



(Doesn't interfere  
with spellcasting)

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